

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Pathfinder organizes to bring back 'pick and pack' operation

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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Washington aims ax at Social Security

Rigging cost-of-living index will hurt workers

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

Opening a new front against Social Security, Senators Daniel Moynihan of New York and William Roth of Delaware unveiled a report by a Congress-appointed commission claiming the government has been overstating inflation by 1.1 percent for at least a decade. The commission called on the Republican-majority Congress and the Democratic administration of President William Clinton to take steps to revise the

Defend Social Security!

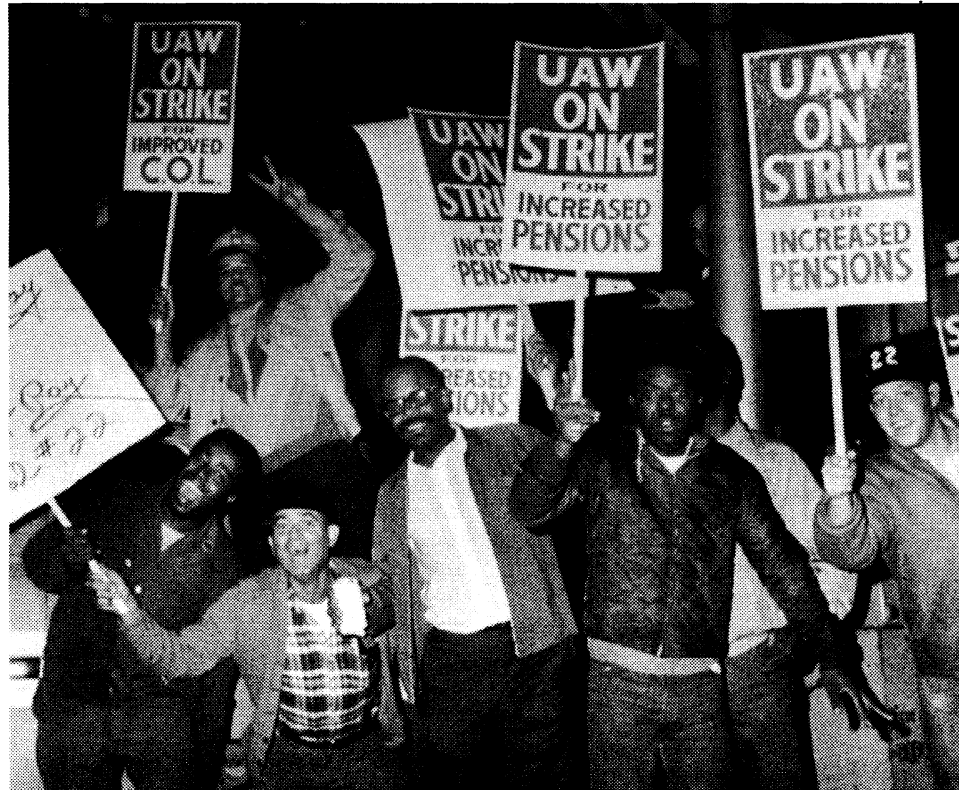
— see editorial, page 10

Consumer Price Index (CPI). The index is used to calculate cost-of-living adjustments for many union contracts as well as for entitlements such as Social Security.

Arbitrarily lowering the CPI by one percentage point, or rigging how cost-of-living increases for social entitlements are measured through other alternatives floated by capitalist politicians, will hurt workers, most of whom depend on Social Security as their only income upon retirement.

The White House began preparations to implement such proposals days after Clinton was re-elected to a second term, on the pretext of balancing the federal budget and "saving" programs such as Social Security and Medicare from supposed imminent bankruptcy by cutting them.

The five-member commission charged with issuing the report on the CPI is headed



Auto workers strike General Motors in Detroit, Sept. 14, 1970, for improved pensions and cost-of-living adjustments. Attacks on social wage today are part of war on labor.

by Michael Boskin, an economics professor at Stanford University and former chief of the White House Council of Economic Affairs under President George Bush. Other members of the panel include Robert Gordon of Northwestern University, Zvi Griliches and Dale Jorgenson of Harvard,

and Ellen Durberger, an economist for International Business Machines Corp. (IBM). Clinton gave his blessing to this bipartisan panel when it was appointed two years ago.

The commission presented its "findings" and recommendations at a December 4 hear-

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Protests shake regime in Belgrade

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Massive demonstrations involving tens of thousands of people protesting the regime of president Slobodan Milosevic have swept the Yugoslav republic of Serbia for two weeks. Some 100,000 protesters marched in Belgrade, the capital, December 2 demanding the resignation of Milosevic after he moved to annul municipal elections held on November 17.

The mass actions "have virtually para-

lyzed the center of Belgrade and several other big cities," the British *Economist* magazine reported. In Nis, tens of thousands of workers marched in the streets while students and professors occupied all that city's university buildings. The demonstrations mark the largest and most sustained challenge to the Stalinist Milosevic regime since he took power in a 1987 coup.

Other mass protests, including a march of 100,000 people in 1992, were organized

against the Serbian government after Milosevic launched a war against Croatia in 1991. Six months of fighting in Croatia that year ended with 10,000 people killed.

The recent protests were sparked when Milosevic canceled the results of voting where his opponents won city government elections in 15 of Serbia's 18 largest cities, including Belgrade. The Serbian government held new elections on November 27, which were boycotted by the opposition coalition, known as Zajedno. More than 50,000 people protested those elections.

Economic crisis in Serbia

Working people in Serbia are experiencing a severe economic crisis. In 1990, 320,000 people lived below poverty line; by 1994 this figure was eight times higher. According to London's *Financial Times*, the average monthly wage is about \$125. More than half the work force is unemployed, while one-half of the factories are closed.

In Nis, an industrial city of 200,000, wages that a decade ago averaged \$800 a month have now fallen to \$40, and are generally three months late.

The U.S. has led the political and economic sanctions imposed on the Yugoslav republics of Serbia and Montenegro. Previous sanctions that blocked capitalist investment and trade with Serbia were lifted by the United Nations Security Council as part of last year's Dayton "peace" accords, which partitioned Bosnia. However,

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100,000 students and others protested Milosevic regime in Belgrade November 25

Quebecois resist cuts in health, education

BY ANNETTE KOURI

MONTREAL — The Quebec government faces rising opposition in its efforts to impose major cuts in health and education. The six most important public sector unions have called for demonstrations and strike actions to fight the attacks, including a December 7 protest in Quebec City.

On November 13, the Parti Quebecois government demanded that public sector unions accept by December 6 a plan to cut their workweek and compensate the wage loss through cutting payments to their pension plan. This deadline was later changed to December 9. The government plan would require reopening union contracts in order to cut from the pensions. This is the latest proposal in government attempts to eliminate the provincial deficit in four years. The campaign to cut provincial spending in social services follows the federal government slashing of millions of dollars in transfer payments to the provinces.

On two days' notice the public sector unions mobilized about 15,000 of their members in a demonstration in Quebec City outside the ruling Parti Quebecois convention on November 23. "Enough's enough. Everything we've won — we've fought for!" said demonstration participant Pierrette Ouellet, vice president of her union grievance committee at Maisonneuve-Rosemont Hospital. "We have to get back to fighting. As for myself, I'm fighting for what my elders won and for my children. We have to rediscover solidarity rapidly."

Students also demonstrated. Yannick Paradis, a student from Marie-Victorin College, added that he was demonstrating "to encourage our teachers, who unanimously supported us." He was referring to the stu-

Continued on Page 10

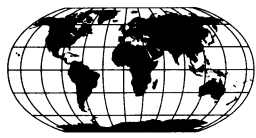
400,000 miners go on strike in Russia

BY BRIAN TAYLOR

On December 3 hundreds of thousands of coal miners throughout Russia went on strike to demand back wages, which have not been paid for months. The miners were joined by teachers and other workers in many regions. Union leaders estimate more than two-thirds of the country's 560,000 miners went out. According to one Associated Press report, the strike reached from the "Far East to central Russia ... idling at least 180 mines," and leaving Russian president Boris Yeltsin "concerned." Coal makes up 80 percent of Russia's heating fuel, and half the fuel used in electrical plants.

In St. Petersburg, 150 nuclear plant workers waged a day-long warning strike, coinciding with the miners' action. Retired workers, who haven't received their pension checks, blocked the Moscow-St. Petersburg railway near Tver. Government figures estimate some \$8 billion is owed in back wages to public and private sector workers.

Cuban speakers stir interest in Texas, N.Y., Washington — page 4



Video shows Israeli cop brutality

On November, 19 two Israeli cops were arrested for the brutal beating of Palestinians trying to cross the West Bank border a month before. Azzam Maraka witnessed the act and captured it on videotape October 10. The tape, aired on national television, shows officers kicking Palestinians in the head and groin, slapping them around, and forcing them to do pushups.

Public Security Minister of Israel Avigdor Kahalani claimed, "This is a culture I don't know.... It really is something very exceptional." Speaking of the brutality dished out to Palestinians by the cops, Maraka said, "It happens a lot." Even chief border cop Yisrael Sadan was forced to admit, "This is not an isolated case.... It is an isolated case that was photographed." After a similar incident in 1993 resulted in the killing of a Palestinian, an Israeli court fined the soldiers responsible the equivalent of one third of a penny.

Greek workers strike: 'crippling'

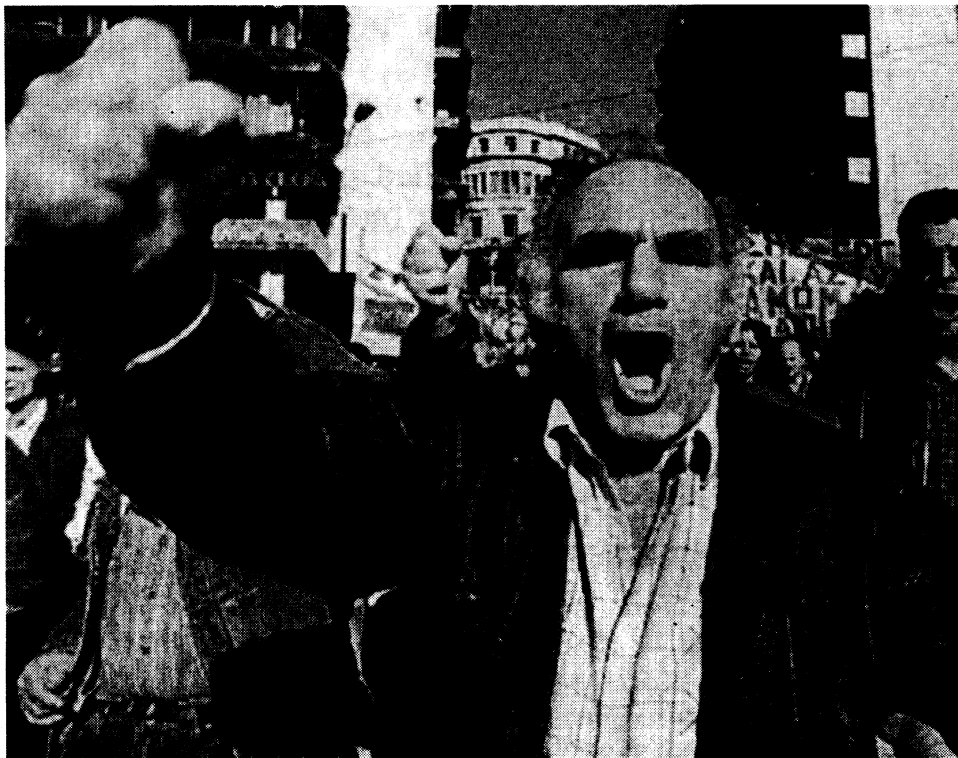
Members of the Greek Confederation of Labor marched in the streets November 28 during a 24-hour strike against government planned austerity measures. The measures include a freeze on public sector hiring and cut tax allowances for workers. The walk-out came one day before the economy minister, Yannis Papantoniou, was to present a budget to parliament.

London's *Financial Times* reported the strike left the transportation system "severely disrupted, with international flights being delayed." Bus and train services were stopped, and taxi drivers joined the strike.

German metalworkers firm on 100 percent sick-pay entitlements

The Germany's IG Metall union, which has a membership of 850,000 workers in the North Rhine-Westphalia, forced employers into negotiations November 25 after the union refused to accept a 20 percent sick-pay cut. Daimler-Benz and other big companies tried to impose 80 percent sick-pay for workers, triggering a series of work stoppages that forced employers to back down.

The bosses are attempting to cut their labor costs, but the metalworkers union has



Protester in Athens, Greece, shows opposition to 1997 austerity budget.

not budged from its position of maintaining sick pay at 100 percent of normal wages.

Romanian gov't plans 'reforms'

Newly sworn in Romanian president Emil Constantinescu, promised to accelerate moves toward a free market economy. At the same time he warned that rough times lay ahead for working people as his regime aims to dismantle the gains of the workers' state. He cited the speed up of privatization as one of his 'reform' measures. Constantinescu's party, the Democratic Convention will set up the new government together with the Union of Social Democracy.

One billion lack full employment

A report issued by the United Nations November 25, stated that in 1995, the number of those either unemployed or underemployed rose to one billion. This marks an increase of 180 million since the previous 1993-94 statistics, which then were deemed a crisis not seen since the Great Depression.

Unemployment in Europe is over five and a half times greater than in the 1960s. The report cited that 30 percent of the world's labor force lacks full employment.

Cops post up racist cartoon strip

Two racist cartoons were found in the St. Petersburg, Florida, police headquarters in November. One drawing of the recently cop-slain Black youth, TyRon Lewis, depicted him falling into fire with a devil, pitchfork in hand, saying "TyRon, we've been expecting you." The other etching shows several racist stereotyped drawings of Blacks talking slang laced with profanity. The police chief Darel Stephens refused to name the artist responsible. Rev. Clarence Davis, who received one of the drawings from someone in the department said, "I think it says to the Black community that we condemn you to hell.... That you are worthless and that we can do without you."

Secrecy laws violate constitution

Attacking constitutional rights, a New York state panel called the Commission on Child Abuse has recommended several changes in the state child welfare system. In the name of protecting abused children, the panel proposes making endangering the welfare of a child a felony instead of a misdemeanor, keeping unsubstantiated claims of abuse on record and accessible to police and other state institutions for possible evidence, and giving welfare agencies more power to take babies born with drugs away from their mothers. Civil liberties groups said that this legislation could violate the right to privacy and would victimize individuals falsely accused of child abuse. Public concerns about racial discrimination and the constitutionality in conducting drug tests

on babies have hindered these undemocratic measures in the past.

Woman wins \$60,000 settlement for harassment by U.S. army

On November 25, the U.S. Army agreed to pay \$60,000 to Cecilia Marie Port, a former civilian security guard, who said she was sexually harassed by co-workers and then punished by the Army for making this known. Port said she was constantly hit with lewd comments while working at Aberdeen Proving Ground as the only woman on the shift. The other guards would not relieve her temporarily at her post to use the bathroom. When she complained the Army retaliated by assigning her to a trailer. The Army admitted to the harassment, firing one guard, but only reprimanding supervisors involved.

Mexican sugar workers win fight

Members of the Mexican Sugar Workers Union, who represent 45,000 workers, won a 26 percent raise after striking all 62 of the country's refineries in late November. The two-year contract with the National Sugar Producers Business Chamber of Mexico also includes improvements in working conditions and increased training for workers.

The union said that the real wages of its members has been in decline since the December 1994 devaluation of the Mexican peso. The Confederation of Mexican Workers says the cost of basic food has risen 120 percent in this period.

Brazil cops convicted of killings

On November 28, Brazilian state trooper Nelson Oliveira dos Santos Cunha was convicted of the 1993 murder of eight street children. Cunha and other gunmen opened fire on a group of about 70 homeless children sleeping in Candelaria Church Square in Rio de Janeiro, killing six youth on the spot. Two others were taken to the beach and murdered execution style. Cunha, who admitted being on site, blamed the killing on a cop who was killed two years ago.

Over 3,000 children live in the streets of Rio de Janeiro. Human rights groups say shopkeepers pay policeman to kill homeless children that dwell near their establishments. Police records count 596 minors as slain in Rio de Janeiro state in 1995, but rights groups say the toll is much higher because many are killed and buried in secret.

Venezuela workers fight for pay

Venezuelan public workers struck for 10 days in November demanding back pay. Union officials suspended the job action for two days November 29. "We called a two-day truce as of last Friday to give the government a last chance to pay up," said Carlos Borges, head of the public workers union. Workers are owed 10 months of wage bonuses totaling \$212 million. The strike and actions surrounding it had affected many public offices and ministries.

— BRIAN TAYLOR

THE MILITANT

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Protests in Yugoslavia

Continued from front page

Washington continues to maintain a so-called "outer wall" of sanctions that denies the Belgrade regime access to loans from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and other aid programs sponsored by the United Nations.

Opponents of Milosevic seek to tap the discontent of working people and youth disgusted with deteriorating living conditions. They have called for a series of strikes to start December 2. "We will begin a wave of strikes ... spreading to all the universities, schools, and factories," declared Zoran Djindjic, president of the Democratic party.

Opposition politicians have organized meetings with union leaders, including officials of the transport unions, in an effort to build support for general strikes. They say the support of workers in Belgrade is crucial to driving Milosevic from power.

"Our main task now is to bring workers

in Belgrade into the protest," the *New York Times* cited one unnamed "opposition leader" as saying. Workers in Nis and some other industrial cities have joined the protests, while in Belgrade working-class support has been minimal, according to press reports.

A larger, more explosive confrontation is looming as the Serbian regime beefs up its police force in Nis. The government deployed 5,000 cops from an elite unit formerly stationed in Kosovo to the back streets of the city. Belgrade has a well-armed police force of 80,000 men.

Government halts news broadcasts

Reflecting its fear of the mobilizations, the regime pulled all news programs off the airwaves November 27 to eliminate coverage of the demonstrations. The government also restricted the press run of *Blitz*, the only major newspaper to report on the protests.

Pro-capitalist opponents of Milosevic, hoping for imperialist intervention, have expressed disappointment with Washington's response. Ilija Djukic, an adviser to the Zajedno coalition and a former foreign minister, tried to rally support in a meeting with several ambassadors. "They said very little," he complained. "They need Milosevic. He is guaranteeing the Dayton agreement for them."

The Clinton administration has been generally mute on the protests, while keeping



options open to expand its military role in Yugoslavia. "We are urging that the decision to annul the municipal elections be overturned by President Milosevic," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said November 26.

At a November 29 news conference in Bosnia, U.S. defense secretary William Perry said an "instantaneous" reassessment of the situation could require bringing in additional forces if a crisis erupts. "We see the stabilization force as facing a very difficult mission."

Clinton had announced earlier in November that a scaled down U.S. occupation force of 8,500 troops will remain in Bosnia until mid-1998. Perry added that the size of the U.S. force in Bosnia may have to be temporarily increased again next year.

Meanwhile, the big-business media has begun floating the idea of military combat involving U.S. soldiers as well as Washington maintaining its occupation force in the Balkans beyond the 18 months announced by Clinton on November 15.

"There are going to be some surprises like Desert Storm [in Iraq]," the *New York Times* quoted from Sgt. Arlee Robinson, a GI stationed in Bosnia.

Kurdish refugees fight intolerable conditions, demand asylum in Greece

BY GEORGES MEHRABIAN

ATHENS, Greece — "On October 25 an Iraqi Kurd died here at this camp," Abou Ali, a member of the executive committee of the Kurdish Refugees from Iraq at the Agios Andreas camp, told this reporter. "He had marched for over 20 days from Iraqi Kurdistan through Turkey and much of Greece. He arrived the evening before. The next day he was dead, a victim of the march. These are the conditions our people face."

Two weeks later, on November 7, the bus service that takes some of the refugees to their day jobs was cut off, as were the telephones. The 1,300 refugees at the camp — most of them Kurds who have fled repression by the Saddam Hussein regime in northern Iraq — responded by refusing all assistance from aid groups, and 72 began a hunger strike. "We contacted all the antiracist organizations, as well as the press, to get our story out," Ali said. "After 36 hours the government issued a decision to grant all of us immediate residence and work permits for six months."

"This is a major victory, since it is the first time the government has been forced to grant such a number of permits in bulk," he continued. "However, we will not be demobilized. Our main demand for political refugee status has yet to be granted and we will continue to fight for this until the end. With this in mind we will participate with other immigrants and antiracist organizations in a joint contingent during the November 17 student mobilizations."

On November 17, thousands of students and workers demonstrated in the yearly commemoration of the 1973 student uprising against the U.S.-backed dictatorship of George Papadopoulos. The Kurdish refugees, as well as Albanian immigrants, demonstrated in a large contingent of immigrant workers.

Entering the Agios Andreas camp, which is about an hour and a half outside of Athens, one is met by a large banner reading "Political Refugee Status for the Kurds!" At the entrance are residents of the camp who welcome visitors. Every aspect of camp life has been organized by the residents themselves. The visitors are taken to a conference room where they are briefed as to the conditions and the demands of the residents.

A walk through the camp shows the indifference of the Greek authorities. The camp is a summer vacation spot for Greek youth and belongs to the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. Located near the sea, it is designed for summer occupancy for about 300 people. Tents designed for about 6 people now have 16 people or more living in them. About 300 sleep out in the open, as there are not enough tents. With the approach of winter and the rapid drop in temperatures, these conditions will lead to diseases.

A small clinic staffed by volunteers from Doctors Without Borders is operating, but with its one bed is totally inadequate.

Last April about 200 Iraqi Kurds occupied a square in downtown Athens. They set up a camp with houses made from cardboard and wood. This action was in protest of their lack of housing. They demanded

housing be given them. They were all undocumented. The police threatened them with arrest and deportations. At that point the Kurds appealed to the Coordinating Committee of Anti-Racist and Immigrant Organizations. The Coordinating Committee responded with a campaign aimed at preventing the arrests and evictions. The mayor assigned a task force and promises of housing were made.

In September the city administration proposed moving the Kurds to the Agios Andreas camp. By then the war in Iraqi Kurdistan had erupted again and the ranks of the refugees swelled to close to a thousand. The proposal was debated at a general meeting in the occupied square September

15, and the protesters decided to move to the new camp.

In the time that the Iraqi Kurds have been at Agios Andreas, there has been a constant flow of well-wishers bringing food, clothing, or just passing by to give their support. Fighters from the immigrant communities of Athens are also starting to go.

"Your fight is a fight for all immigrants here," explained Samsideen Iddrisu, former President of the Pan African Association of Greece (PANAG), during a visit to the camp on October 22. "We must focus on your demands, they are morally, politically and legally just. And we know that a victory for you will open the door for others. This is why the government is being so obstinate."

Activists celebrate life of Lois Remple

BY PAT GROGAN

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah — Close to 200 people gathered November 13 at the First Congregational Church in Pueblo, Colorado, to pay tribute to the life and political accomplishments of Lois Remple. A longtime activist and a supporter of the Socialist Workers Party, she died November 7 after being struck by a car. She was 82 years old.

Among the many present were members of the United Farm Workers union, activists in the movement for Chicano rights in the area, members of Puebloans for Peace and Justice, Pastors for Peace, Socialist Workers campaign supporters, and others who had collaborated with Lois over many years.

Francisco Coca and members of his family, Chicano farmers in the land rights struggle in Aguilar, Colorado, provided entertainment. Many spoke of Lois's dedication to the cause of Chicano rights.

In the late 1950s Remple became active in the civil rights movement and joined the NAACP in Pueblo. She was an active opponent of the Vietnam War and a strong supporter of migrant farm workers and the struggle of the Chicano people in the area for land and water rights.

She was a founder of Puebloans for Justice and Peace in Central America, a group that opposed the U.S.-backed contra war against the Nicaraguan revolution, and at age 71 went to Nicaragua to take part in a work brigade in 1986. An article in the *Pueblo Chieftain* at the time noted that she was the oldest participant in the three-week coffee-picking brigade. She told the reporter the work "wasn't anything I couldn't handle."

Remple also organized opposition to the Gulf War of 1990-91. In the last years, she devoted a great deal of her time to defending the Cuban revolution, and two years ago traveled to Cuba.

Remple was a fighter against capitalism and a supporter of a revolutionary perspective to change society. In 1975 Remple was introduced to the *Militant* newspaper by her son, Chris. She became a supporter of the Socialist Workers Party and in 1982 was the party's candidate for lieutenant governor of Colorado.

A letter sent from Paul Mailhot, on behalf of the SWP's National Committee, said, "Those of us in the Socialist Workers Party who knew Lois valued her dedication to the cause of the working class, the Chicano struggle, and the defense of democratic rights."

Mailhot pointed to the many contributions Remple made to building the socialist movement over the years. She aided SWP election campaigns, sold the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* at the Colorado Fuel and Iron plant and elsewhere, helped publicize the victory of the SWP and Young Socialist Alliance in their suit against FBI harassment, and made regular financial contributions to the party, Mailhot said. "Her consistent activity and support was a genuine contribution to building the socialist movement," Mailhot wrote.

Mailhot pointed out that Lois had been active in the mid-1970s in publicizing the Steelworkers Fight Back union election campaign of Ed Sadlowski among workers at the Colorado Fuel and Iron mill. The movement that Sadlowski headed was the most important struggle going on in the U.S. labor movement at the time — a genuine battle for a union that was democratic and stood up for the rights of workers.

"Working people and youth can learn a great deal from the example Lois set in her life," Mailhot continued. "Enthusiasm for the struggles of working people and integrity in working with others — these were the qualities that impressed me about Lois the few times I met her. The young people who are coming into politics today, joining the battles of the oppressed, attracted to the working class and entering the ranks of the socialist movement, are paying a fine tribute to the life of Lois Remple."

A letter from the Salt Lake City branch of the SWP was read to the meeting. Lois always made her house available as a base of operations when supporters of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* would drive down from Salt Lake to participate in activities of the United Mine Workers union in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico. Members of the branch always looked forward to talking with Lois about

world politics, women's liberation, and developments in the labor movement, as well as learning about developments in the fight for Chicano rights or other struggles in the area.

The letter pointed out that Lois helped get James Harris and Laura Garza, the SWP candidates for U.S. president and vice president, on the ballot in Colorado. She was working with branch members to help distribute Pathfinder books to libraries and bookstores in the Pueblo area. Lois looked forward to the publication of every new Pathfinder book or issue of *New Internationalist*. "She was always especially keen to get out Pathfinder books on the Cuban revolution," the letter said. "Lois read and studied with the avid interest of one who remained convinced of the capacity of the working class to change society and who was determined to play her part."

Garza leaves *Militant* staff to build Houston SWP, YS

BY NAOMI CRAINE

With this issue, the *Militant* announces the release of staff writer Laura Garza. Since May of this year, she had been on leave to campaign as the Socialist Workers Party candidate for vice president of the United States. Garza is moving to Houston to strengthen the SWP branch in that city. With the rise in the national struggle by Chicanos and Mexicans, the opportunities to build the communist movement in that area have grown. Since July, seven youth have joined the Young Socialists in Texas, forming chapters in Houston and McAllen.

Garza joined the *Militant* staff in January 1995, after working as a member of the United Steelworkers of America in Miami. She has covered a broad range of questions for the paper, and participated in reporting trips to Cuba, Mexico, and the United Nations conference on women in Beijing, China.

Texas tour of Cuban diplomat stirs interest

BY JERRY FREIWIRTH
AND PATTI IYAMA

HOUSTON, Texas — A speaking tour of Texas by Dagoberto Rodríguez, First Secretary of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C., sparked controversy and attracted sizable audiences throughout the southern part of the state.

Some 150 heard Rodríguez November 12, at a public meeting at the University of Houston. The next night, a similar size crowd came to a meeting at a church in Houston's Black community. Around 100 heard and asked questions of the Cuban diplomat at the University of Texas, Pan American, a few miles from the Mexican border.

Tour sponsors ranged from the regional director of the local American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), to the president of Local 4-227 of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers union, the coordinator of the Refugee Immigrant Rights Coalition at the Rio Grande Valley, and several university professors and student groups.

Rodríguez spoke at nearly a dozen other meetings and receptions during the week-long tour. His visit received prominent coverage from major newspapers and TV stations in Houston, San Antonio, and the Rio Grande Valley.

'Is it a sin that workers take power?'

One of the highlights of the tour was the day Rodríguez spent in the Rio Grande Valley, a major agricultural and industrial center along the border with Mexico. Many of the predominantly Mexican-American youth and workers in attendance were hearing a representative of the Cuban government for the first time.

"Is it a sin that workers take power in a country and begin for the first time to decide their own destiny?" Rodríguez said, speaking at the San Benito Community Center. Despite an unceasing economic war by Washington, he added, "the immense majority of people in Cuba are deeply proud of their revolution and committed to continuing forward."

Rodríguez detailed the reasons why the Cuban people overthrew the U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959. Prior to the victory of the revolution, he explained, Cuba was completely dominated by U.S. imperialism. This colonial-type relationship was "maintained by the overwhelming presence of U.S. corporations and, when necessary,

the U.S. Marines. There was massive corruption and Havana became a giant casino crawling with the U.S. Mafia. Before 1959 unemployment was rampant in Cuba, 40 percent of the people were illiterate, and life expectancy barely exceeded 50 years."

In contrast, Rodríguez said, "Cuba today has 100 percent literacy, life expectancy is equal to that of the industrial countries at 72 years, and infant mortality is down to 9.4 per 1,000 children — the lowest in Latin America. Furthermore, free health care and education through college are available to everyone."

Misconceptions about revolution

One of the most frequently asked questions during the tour was whether Cuba is governed by a dictatorship. At a meeting with Presbyterian and other church leaders, Rodríguez described the decision-making process in Cuba. "We do have elections," he said. "We vote every two and a half years to elect our local officials and every five years for national offices, including the President.... All of our officials are subject to immediate recall if the people don't like what they are doing, unlike here in the United States where you have to wait for several years just to vote again."

"We think that just voting every few years is not the most meaningful part of democracy," the Cuban diplomat stated. "We operate by national consensus, where the people are consulted about the decisions that affect them. For instance, our legislators proposed that an income tax should be established to balance the budget. Eighty thousand meetings were held in schools, factories, and other workplaces all over the country to discuss this proposal, along with others. The workers were overwhelmingly against it. So the legislature did not institute an income tax on wages and instead adopted other measures."

Rodríguez pointed out repeatedly at his public appearances that "Cuba is not at all perfect. There are still many problems that we have to solve." The Caribbean nation has faced its most severe economic crisis since 1990, when, overnight, it lost aid and trade on favorable terms with the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. Through the active mobilization and self-sacrifice of workers and farmers in Cuba, however, the economic crisis has bottomed out and a recovery has begun. "Even with the difficulties," Rodríguez said, "the Cuban people continue to defend the gains of the revolution. Not a single school, not a single clinic, not a single hospital was closed."

Tour connects with Chicano militancy

A special feature of the tour was its interaction with the rise in political activity among Chicanos and Mexican youth evident in recent



Militant/ Lisa Ahlberg

Johana Tablada, third secretary at the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C. (left), speaking with MEChA activists at Yakima Valley Community College in Yakima, Washington, at a meeting of 60 people, hosted by that group. The November 13-16 tour in Washington State included several campus meetings that drew 250 students and city-wide meeting in Seattle, held at El Centro de la Raza community center with over 140 attending. Tablada also spoke with 40 farm and agricultural workers, in Sunnyside, Washington, where workers asked the Cuban representative about conditions of workers in Cuba today.

months. Attacks against immigrants and affirmative action, in particular, have sparked growing protests in high schools and colleges.

The campus MEChA or other Hispanic organizations were prominent among the sponsors of every university meeting. At a special gathering hosted by the Pan American MEChA chapter, students discussed with Rodríguez the relationship between culture, revolutionary nationalism, and socialism. Rodríguez also spoke at a Texas-wide Tejana/Tejano Student Unity Conference at the University of Houston (see article on page 11).

"How Cuba Has Dealt with Racism" was the topic of Rodríguez's talk at the Shrine of the Black Madonna, a well-known Pan-African Christian church in Houston's Black community. This was the first time a figure from socialist Cuba had ever spoken to a large African American audience here.

Rodríguez described how racist "Jim Crow" segregation was introduced into Cuba by the U.S. occupation forces after the Spanish-American War. He described how the victory against U.S. imperialism in 1959 and the subsequent elimination of capitalism opened the door to taking rapid leaps toward the eradication of racism.

Rodríguez spoke to hundreds of working people in Texas. The ad-hoc tour committee gathered some significant endorsements from trade union officials as well. Four members of OCAW Local 4-367 at Shell Oil pitched in to help organize the speaking tour, and two others attended tour events. But organizers were less successful in arranging speaking engagements before local union bodies, which are headed, in most

instances, by officials who lend support to Washington's policies against Cuba.

In San Antonio, some 15 right-wing Cubans picketed two of the events featuring Rodríguez. They were protesting the socialist policies of the Cuban government. Representatives of the groups opposed to the Cuban revolution attended both meetings and participated in the discussion.

But such opposition was the exception.

The broad support for the tour, helped deter any disruptions of Rodríguez's meetings. Debbie Perkey, for example, Regional Director of the American Civil Liberties Union, co-chaired one of the public events in Houston. Lenwood Johnson, chair of the Allen Parkway Village Residents Council, took Rodríguez on a tour of public housing in Houston, including the now half-demolished Allen Parkway Village, the center of a 20-year battle to defend low-income housing here. Rodríguez also met with activists in this struggle.

A breakfast was held with leading Chicano and Latino activists in Houston, sponsored by María Jiménez and Benito Juárez, nationally prominent figures in defense of immigrant rights. Sissy Farenthold, a well-known liberal activist in Texas, hosted a reception for the Cuban diplomat at her house. At the public meeting at the University of Houston, Farenthold presented Rodríguez with a proclamation from Mayor Robert Lanier welcoming him to the city.

Patti Iiyama, a member of OCAW Local 4-227, was an organizer of the Ad Hoc Committee to Tour Dagoberto Rodríguez. Jerry Freiwirth is a member of OCAW Local 4-367.



Militant/ Hilda Cuzco

Norberto Codina, Cuban poet and editor of *La Gaceta de Cuba*, the magazine of the National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba, is shown above at public forum at Casa de las Americas in New York November 22. Joining Codina on the platform are translator Vivian Ara (left) and Rosina Rodríguez (right) of the Dominican Friends of Cuba, one of the dozen organizations that sponsored the event. Some 140 people attended the gathering at Casa, the final event in Codina's five-day tour in New York and New Jersey. In all, the Cuban poet addressed over 400 people at 10 meetings. These included poetry readings and presentations at Hunter College, Pratt University, Borough of Manhattan Community College, Hostos Community College, and WestBeth Gallery in New York. Codina also had dinner with a dozen workers in garment, rail, and Machinist unions. One of the most successful events of the tour was a meeting of nearly 100 students and others at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, sponsored by the campus Latin American Student Organization.

Boston professor gets support in case against government harassment

BY VALERIE JOHNSON

BOSTON — "I am really encouraged that the reaction to my case indicates there is widespread opposition to travel restrictions, and perhaps the media and the public were not fully aware of these restrictions," stated Tom Reeves in a recent interview. "It is clear that people do not believe that academic study should be scrutinized by the government. My case has brought the issue to a higher level of discussion, the whole issue of travel restrictions to anywhere in the world, Libya, Iraq, etc. This is not consistent with any concept of democracy."

Reeves is facilitator of the Caribbean Focus Program at the Roxbury Community College (RCC) here. He spoke to *Militant* reporters after the conclusion of a successful series of events to defend his constitutional rights in face of harassment by the U.S. Treasury Department and to protest

threats by the RCC administration to fire him. Hundreds of students and others attended meetings at area campuses in late November, organized by the Ad Hoc RCC Cuba Tour Defense Committee. The group was formed to protest the government's actions and defend Reeves.

The Treasury Department has demanded that Reeves turn over to the government names and other information about participants in a field study trip to Cuba, sponsored by the school. Top figures in the college administration have threatened to fire Reeves if he does not comply. Reeves has maintained that the demand for information constitutes discriminatory enforcement of the law and is a violation of his constitutional rights.

The RCC Caribbean Focus Program regularly holds accredited courses on Car-

Continued on Page 5

SELL THE BOOKS WORKERS OF THE WORLD NEED

Join the campaign to sell Pathfinder books and pamphlets

Volunteers needed to set up Pathfinder 'pick and pack'

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Dozens of workers, students, and other volunteers will be coming into New York over the next few weeks to help reorganize the warehousing and shipping of books and pamphlets distributed by Pathfinder. The volunteers will unload some 175,000 books at the Pathfinder Building, where the publisher's editorial offices and printshop are located.

By Jan. 1, 1997, the entire "pick and pack" operation will be run out of the facility, utilizing previously wasted space on the third floor of the building. The project was announced at four regional socialist educational conferences held in the United States November 29 - December 1.

This move will improve the ability of the communist vanguard to rapidly respond to political events, like they did during U.S. imperialism's war against Iraq in 1991. During Washington's war drive against the workers and peasants in Iraq, socialist workers in Pathfinder and its printshop made an extra effort to quickly produce *U.S. Hands off the Mideast!* in the form of a pamphlet and later a book. It contains speeches of Cuban leaders Fidel Castro and Ricardo Alarcón, who spoke at the United Nations against the imperialist slaughter.

Communist workers campaigned against the war using this book and other political weapons on the job, at campuses, at protests, and other political events. They sold Pathfinder books, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and the *Militant* to co-workers, which printed articles explaining what was happening in the Gulf. These articles were part of prepar-

ing *New International* no. 7, which features "Opening Guns of World War III: Washington's Assault on Iraq."

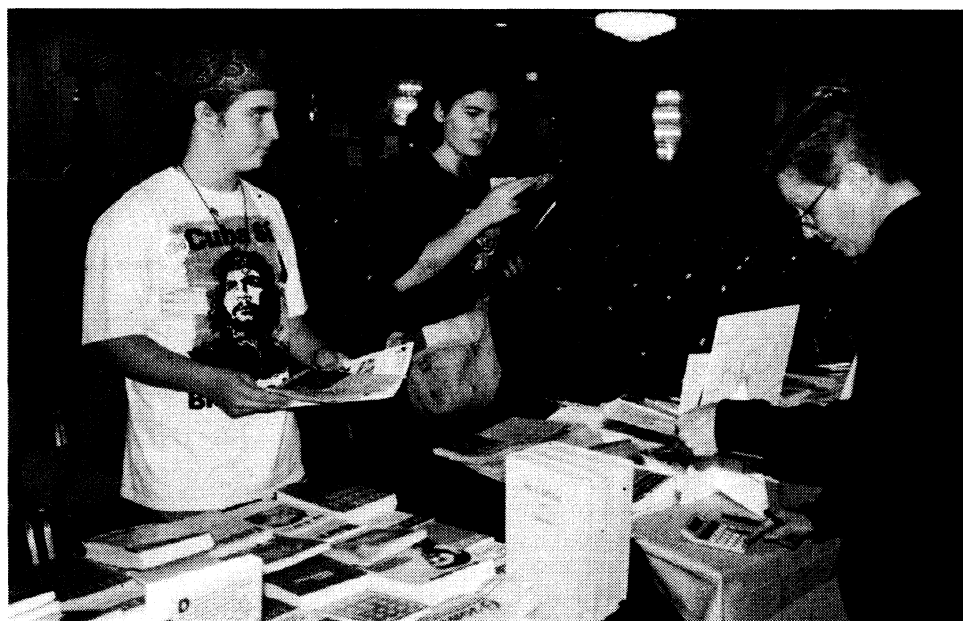
The pick and pack operation will be organized on a just-in-time production schedule, said Chris Hoeppner, the general manager of Pathfinder's printshop. "We'll organize to produce books every week to ensure every Pathfinder title stays in print," Hoeppner said. Pathfinder publishes and distributes more than 300 titles, ranging from classics by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels to books on today's struggles.

"Pathfinder will provide a six-month list of titles that are running low, which the shop will reprint in short runs. Our aim is to increase productivity, reduce printing costs, and cut waste rates.

"Having just the stock we need decreases capital tied up in inventory," Hoeppner added, "and we'll be transforming a floor that's been underutilized into part of the production and distribution factory in the Pathfinder building."

At the same time, the Pathfinder staff will organize a daily schedule of scanning books, to put the text in digital form. Books that are stored as computer files can be easily stored, quickly reproduced, and printed with more readable type. By working on this project day-to-day, the Pathfinder staff will also be able to incorporate the help of volunteers.

For the last five years Pathfinder books were stored and shipped out of a commercial warehouse. Bringing the books back to the New York facility is part of completing steps taken almost two years ago, when the order-entry and invoicing done by a data



Militant/ Margrethe Siem

Dozens of participants at socialist conferences in Atlanta, Peoria, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C., volunteered to help set up Pathfinder fulfillment operation and contributed to capital fund. Above, participants at Washington conference check out socialist books. More coverage on the conferences will appear in upcoming issues of the *Militant*.

entry and commercial fulfillment company was taken back to be organized by Pathfinder personnel.

Fund to raise \$280,000

In conjunction with this move, a \$280,000 capital fund was launched at the regional conferences. It will finance the reorganization of pick and pack operation, as well as other long-term capital needs to maintain the factory and equipment. One of these needs is completing the repair of the building's south wall, which was beginning to sustain structural damage from water leakage. This month siding is going up over that wall.

The capital fund will last until February

28. So far \$130,000 has been raised from 29 contributors. Donations to the fund come primarily from working people, and include bonuses from contract agreements, company profit sharing, inheritances, and other financial windfalls of \$1,000 or more.

Those who would like to contribute can write to Pathfinder at 410 West St., New York, NY 10014, or call (212) 741-0690.

Leaders of the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialists announced that the project needed volunteers at the regional educational conferences. "The work will include clearing the third floor where the books will be stored, assembling and setting up shelves, unloading the truckloads of books, arranging them on the shelves, and other tasks to set up a professional packing and shipping area," said Kevin Dwire, who heads up the printshop bindery and is organizing the project. "There is enough work for dozens of volunteers to come and participate, especially the weekends of December 21 and December 28."

Dwire urged readers of the *Militant*, Pathfinder books, and supporters of the communist movement to join in the effort. Activists from cities across the United States are planning to participate. Two members of the Young Socialists from Sweden and a worker from Greece are already in New York spending a week moving equipment and other tasks. They will also participate in selling Pathfinder books and the *Militant* newspaper to workers at a plant gate and to students at a local campus.

Boston professor fights gov't probe

Continued from Page 4

ibbean topics, including field study trips. These have included visits to Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico. In 1995, the program offered the first course on Cuba, followed by a study tour of the country in May of this year.

Seventeen participants applied for licenses with the U.S. Treasury Department for the trip. Six were granted licenses and one was a journalist. The remaining ten — part-time students who included teachers, health care professionals, social workers, and church representatives — re-applied under a provision of the government regulations allowing research by community organizations with an established interest in Cuba. Trip organizers were told by Treasury department officials prior to the tour that the application was under consideration and licenses may be granted retroactively.

The Caribbean Focus Program at RCC has also hosted the Faculty-Student Cuban Youth Lectures Committee. Reeves is on the board of that group. The committee sponsored three successful speaking tours for Cuban youth leaders on U.S. campuses from 1992 to 1995. The Lectures Committee is currently coordinating invitations from profes-

sors on a number of campuses for two young Cubans to visit the United States next year. Rolando González Patrício from the Center for the Studies of José Martí and Dania Murgado García of the Federation of University Students are invited to speak at U.S. universities in the spring of 1997.

On May 23 Reeves received a letter from the Treasury Department demanding that he provide details about the trip, including "the name and current address of all individuals who participated in the Field Study." The letter pointed out that "criminal penalties for violation of [federal] regulations range up to 10 years in prison, and \$1 million in corporate and \$250,000 in individual fines... and civil penalties of \$50,000."

The RCC administration insisted Reeves comply or face possible dismissal. An August 22 letter from the administration stated, "You may be assured that the College will not tolerate flagrant disregard for requests for honest and direct communication."

John Reinstein, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts is representing Reeves. The RCC-based defense committee recently organized meetings at several Boston area campuses to defend the right to travel to Cuba, publicize Reeve's case and win wider support. On November 20, over 100 people attended such a public meeting at Roxbury Community College.

Sponsors of the meeting included David Rockefeller, Center for Latin American Studies, Harvard University; Latin American Studies Program, Tufts University; American Friends Service Committee, New England Region; July 26 Coalition in Boston; Latin American and Caribbean Solidarity Association; and National Lawyers Guild, Massachusetts chapter.

Wayne Smith, former head of the U.S. interests section in Cuba between 1979 and 1982, and now a visiting professor of Latin American Studies at Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C., was the featured speaker. Smith condemned the increased government harassment of opponents of Washington's policy toward Cuba. He said the embargo-tightening Helms-Burton law, enacted by the Clinton administration in March, "carries the irrationality [of the gov-

ernment] to a new level." Joining him on the platform was Reinstein of the ACLU.

Four students from Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, who participated in a study tour to Cuba addressed the meeting with slides and spoke about their experiences. They explained that upon returning from Cuba it took 18 students four hours to get through customs, which they described as "harassment" and "demeaning." Two students from the RCC tour to Cuba also spoke. Erin Murphy, a Tufts University student who went on the RCC trip, stated, "It is essential the we see Cuba for ourselves and make our own decisions, make up our own minds."

Other meetings protesting U.S. travel restrictions were held at Harvard and Tufts Universities on November 20 and 21, involving over 200 students and faculty.

The Reeves case has received widespread media coverage after the protest meetings. The *Boston Globe*, the main daily here, carried a front-page article November 21, headlined, "Professor resists U.S. demand to name those on Cuba trip." The opening of the story stated, "A defiant Roxbury Community College Professor is resisting demands by the U.S. government and college officials to hand over names and addresses of students who took a trip to Cuba that has come under scrutiny by the U.S. Treasury Department."

Reeves explained that as a result of an Associated Press article that has been picked up by newspapers around the country, he has received calls for information and support from New York; Cleveland, Ohio; Nashville, Tennessee; Florida; and other states. The BBC International Service interviewed Reeves live from a hook up with London. He has also been interviewed by the "Chronicle of Higher Education" and the "Larry Pines Show" from New York.

Reeves said the RCC administration had received over 100 calls and messages in support of his case and over 500 signatures have been turned into the Treasury Department on protest petitions. Since its August threat to fire Reeves, the RCC administration has not taken any further steps against him.

Valerie Johnson is a member of the United Transportation Union in Boston.

YS FUND DRIVE Goal: \$6000 BY DECEMBER 1 Final Chart

CITY	PAID
Atlanta	\$50
Boston	\$180
Chicago	\$475
Detroit	\$61
Miami	\$200
Peoria	\$20
Philadelphia	\$123
Salt Lake City	\$35
San Francisco	\$211
Minn.-St. Paul	\$460
Conferences	\$1962
Other	\$45
TOTAL	\$3822

Final chart Young Socialist recruitment drive 70 new YS members

City	# of new members
Athens, GA	3
Atlanta	5
Apex, NC	1
Boston	1
Carbondale, IL	1
Chicago	2
Cleveland	2
Denver	2
Des Moines	1
Detroit	2
Fresno, CA	3
Houston	4
Los Angeles	5
McAllen, TX	3
Minneapolis/St. Paul	2
Morgantown	1
Muncie, IN	1
Newark	3
New York	3
Philadelphia	1
Portland, OR	1
Riverside, CA	1
Salt Lake City	4
San Diego	1
San Francisco	5
Santa Cruz, CA	1
Seattle	2
Spokane, WA	6
Washington, D.C.	3
TOTAL	70

Was Quebecois opposition to conscription 'anti-Semitism'?

BY MICHEL DUGRÉ
AND BRIGITTE GROUX

MONTREAL — Quebec Lieutenant-Governor Jean-Louis Roux resigned from his position November 5, a few days after admitting he wore a swastika during World War II and participated in a demonstration against the conscription during which windows of Jewish stores were smashed.

The lieutenant-governor is the representative in Quebec for Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom. Appointed by Ottawa, he has the power to veto any law adopted by the Quebec government.

Welcoming Roux's resignation, Quebec premier Lucien Bouchard called the position of lieutenant-governor "a colonial relic." The Quebec government strongly opposed Jean-Louis Roux's appointment on September 12. Roux is a staunch federalist. During last year's sovereignty referendum in Quebec, he compared Quebec artists supporting sovereignty to German intellectuals who remained silent during the rise of fascism.

Supporters of the Canadian government are using Roux's past associations to portray Quebecois — the vast majority of whom opposed the two world wars — as anti-Semites.

The Montreal daily *La Presse* ran an article September 11 headlined, "Down with conscription! Down with the Jews!" describing a March 24, 1942, anti-war rally.

Current articles in the Montreal daily *Gazette* routinely describe this and other similar rallies as "anti-conscription, anti-Semitic." In its November 7 editorial, *The Gazette* said that Roux, "like other boys ... in Quebec... was a product of the times." In the same issue, columnist Peggy Curran tried to explain Roux's anti-Semitism by the fact that "1942 was also the height of the conscription crisis in Quebec."

Senator Jacques Hébert said that Roux's generation "had been poisoned by the nationalists of the time." He added that he had been saved "from becoming perhaps a nationalist and a racist" by his father who sent him to a college outside Quebec.

After accepting Roux's apologies, Robert Libman of B'nai Brith said that the positive result of the Roux affair may be "to begin to exorcise some of the demons from a very difficult, dark and silent period in Quebec history."

These attacks against Quebecois opposition to World War II are aimed at preparing coming wars abroad and attacks against working people at home. In resigning, Jean-Louis Roux saluted "those who fought in the ranks of the army of freedom, during the 1914-1918 war, the 1939-1945 war, during all the other wars and, recently, during the peace keeping operations in troubled regions of the world." This conveniently coincides with Ottawa's attempts to set foot again in Africa, after its experience in Somalia where its army proved once again to be racist.

André Laurendeau, a central leader of the

anti-conscription mobilizations in 1942, described the March 24, 1942 rally in quite different terms than *La Presse*. "Applause shook the room," Laurendeau wrote in *The Conscription Crisis*, when a speaker said, "My opponent is not the Jew or the Christian, but the one... who wants to draft our youth but opposes his own wealth being drafted." After the rally, on their way to attacking the *Gazette*, a small number of participants attacked Jewish stores. They were very well organized, noted Laurendeau. They could only have come from the "Black Shirts of [fascist leader] Adrien Arcand," he concluded.

While there were fascists in Quebec during World War II, this reality was not different than the rest of Canada, and all other imperialist countries.

Inter-imperialist war

The anticonscription movement in Quebec was one of the most important movements against an imperialist war in a country at war. Contrary to Ottawa's propaganda both then and now, World War II was not a war to stop fascism. Canada entered the war to defend the interests of Canadian capitalist rulers. The war was against their imperialist rivals for the partition of the world. It was also a war against working people in Canada.

While fascism was and remains the most virulent form of capitalist domination, Ottawa and its allies were no defenders of democracy in the Second World War.

On the first day of the war, Sept. 1, 1939, Ottawa imposed the War Measures Act restricting democratic rights and imposing censorship. On the third day of the war it imposed Rules for National Defense, making it a crime to "oppose recruitment and harm the success of Her Majesty's forces."

Later on, the jailing of thousands of Japanese, many of whom were born in Canada, served as a threat to opponents of the war. Leaders of the anti-war movement were jailed, including the mayor of Montreal, Camilien Houde, who spent four years in jail for his opposition to conscription.

The real character of Ottawa's call for the defeat of fascism in the Second World War can be illustrated by its opposition to the entry of Jews in Canada during this period.

In the last year before the war, Ottawa raised the capital required for a Jewish family to enter Canada from \$5,000 — an enormous sum at the time — to more than \$20,000.

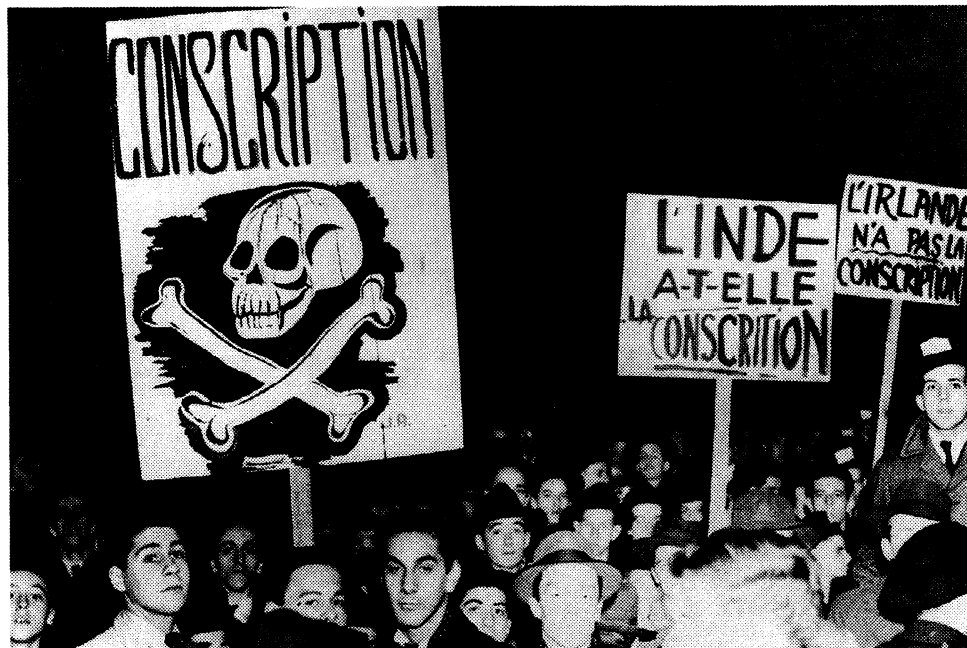
Out of the millions of European Jews looking for a place of refuge between 1933 and 1945, Canada admitted only 5,000. "It is arguably the worst record of all possible refugee-receiving states," said Irving Abella and Harold Troper, authors of a book on this question. "The Jews of Europe were not so much trapped in a whirlwind of systematic mass murder as they were abandoned to it," they said in their preface to the book.

The book is called *None Is Too Many*. Its title is taken from the answer given by a senior Canadian official in 1945 when asked how many Jews would be allowed into Canada after the war.

In their war drive, however, the Canadian rulers faced the massive opposition of Quebecois. In the very first days of the war, several anti-war rallies took place throughout Quebec. Among the main speakers were leaders of the trade union movement and of the main farmers organization.

"We won't go," was the main slogan. Memories of massive mobilizations against the First World War played a big role in these mobilizations. In April 1918, four workers in Quebec City had been killed and hundreds arrested in an armed confrontation with the Canadian army.

At the end of 1941, Ottawa had 125,000 troops in Europe, all volunteers. To deepen



Part of 2,500 students from French language schools protest in Montreal, Quebec, Nov. 29, 1944, against conscription by Canadian federal government during World War II. As part of its campaign against the Quebecois struggle for independence today, the Canadian rulers are trying to portray resistance to conscription — supported by more than 70 percent of Quebecois at the time — as anti-Semitism.

its involvement in the war, it decided to turn to conscription. To legitimize this move despite Quebecois opposition, Ottawa decided to seek a majority vote in a referendum across the country in April 1942.

The purpose of this cross-country referendum was to deny Quebecois their right to decide. From then on Quebecois opposition to the war became more and more intertwined with resistance to this national oppression.

Resistance to war, national oppression

More than 71 per cent of people in Quebec voted against the conscription, while 80 percent of those living outside Quebec voted for. It is estimated that well above 80 per cent of Quebecois and other French-speaking people outside Quebec voted no.

The anti-war mobilization coincided with growing labor resistance in Quebec. Between 1941 and 1944, the annual number of strikes in Quebec was almost four times higher than the average during the 1930s.

Challenging repressive war laws making almost all strikes illegal, workers were fighting for wage parity with workers in Ontario.

While Quebec and Ontario were almost equally industrialized, during the years leading up to the war the unemployment level was at least 30 percent higher in Quebec than Ontario. Employed workers in Quebec worked more hours per week but earned much less annually than workers in Ontario.

The infant mortality rate was 66 per cent higher in Quebec than in Ontario. The death rate from tuberculosis, a disease aggravated by overwork and insufficient diet, was three times higher in Quebec than in Ontario. Illiteracy in Quebec was double that in Ontario, and of the 27 public libraries in the whole province, only 9 were in French. Mobilizations against the war were fueled by resistance to these conditions.

In the summer of 1941, for example, 10,000 aluminum workers in the Saguenay area occupied their plant demanding a wage increase and protesting management's English unilingualism. Ottawa sent the army to end the occupation. The strike ended five days later when hourly wages were increased and changes were made in the management.

Members of the Steelworkers Union at Peck Rolling Mills in Montreal were out for two months in 1941 and forced Ottawa to increase the minimum wage in the war industry. In 1942, strikes took place in the war industries, shipyards, steel mills, tobacco factories, shoe industry, and others.

Some 20,000 workers went on strike against the giant Canadair aircraft plant in 1943. This was the biggest walkout in Canada since the Winnipeg general strike of 1919. It lasted 12 days and workers won union recognition, reduction of the work week, and wage increases.

This strike movement put on the table, as never before, the possibility to overcome the division between workers who speak French and those who speak English in Canada. This division is the main legacy of the defeat of the 1837-1838 bourgeois revolution.

The possibility of a united fight by workers to defend their interests during the war was the real specter that was haunting the Canadian ruling class.

This was a real possibility. While at a lower pace than in Quebec, the number of strikes also increased in Canada during the

war, reaching a summit in 1943. Many bitterly fought strikes were for union recognition. The number of union members doubled in Canada between 1940 and 1945.

In 1941, gold miners from Kirkland Lake in Northern Ontario faced most of the province's police force during their strike. In 1943 steel workers in Galt, Ontario, shut down seven plants in the town to negotiate a contract with the steel companies.

Real steps for unifying the working class in Quebec and in the rest of Canada, however, were prevented by the policy of class collaboration of social-democrat and labor officials outside Quebec, who were supporting the war.

From 1941 on, the Stalinist Communist Party of Canada waged a campaign for "an alliance of all classes... united by the common goal of defending their national existence." In the name of defending Canadian unity, Stalinists supported a "No Strike Pledge," calling on workers to restrain from strike action. Through their newspaper *La Victoire* (The Victory), they denounced as "conscious or unconscious supporters of a hitlerian fifth column inside the country" those in Quebec who opposed conscription.

March toward working-class unity

The main lesson from World War II is that the capitalist government in Ottawa was the main tool through which Canadian rulers denied Quebecois the right to self-determination, attacked workers rights across the country, and waged their war against working people abroad.

The only realistic perspective for working people in Canada and Quebec remains a common fight for a workers and farmers government like the one our brothers and sisters established in Cuba in 1959.

Gains made by Quebecois through massive battles, combined with the weakening of Stalinists and other misleaders who betrayed workers' battles during the war, made the working class in Canada more united and stronger today.

During the same period, however, an important layer of Quebecois capitalists emerged. This helps explain why, over the last few weeks, not one Quebec nationalist leader defended the anti-war movement during World War II. They no longer oppose the Canadian army. The Bloc Quebecois, the official opposition in Ottawa, supported the recent proposal to send the Canadian army in Zaire, as it supported interventions in Somalia and Yugoslavia.

Jacques Parizeau, then leader of the Parti Quebecois, was among the first politicians to call in the Canadian army in 1990 to crush a mobilization by Native people in the Montreal area. As defenders of the interests of a small layer of Quebecois capitalists, the leadership of these parties fear the working class far more than they fear Ottawa.

The fight to put an end to national oppression and win Quebec independence will only move forward as part of the mounting resistance by working people across the country to the deepening attacks on our working and living conditions and to Ottawa's war drive. Working-class unity will make the difference in the toilers' capacity to stay the repressive arm of the Canadian capitalist rulers.

Michel Dugré is a member of the International Association of Machinists.

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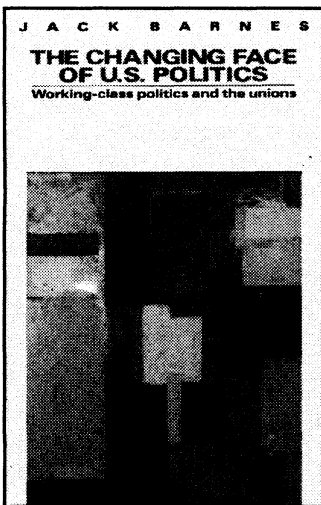
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Holiday reading suggestions FROM PATHFINDER

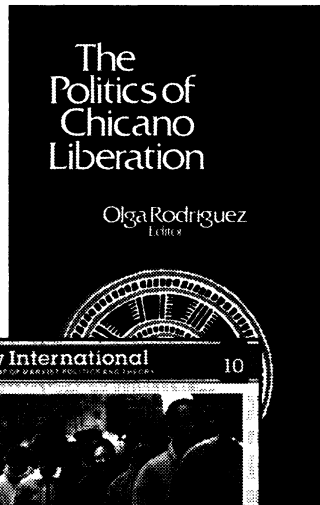


The Changing Face of U.S. Politics

Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions

JACK BARNES

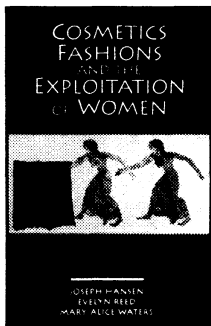
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EDITED BY OLGA RODRIGUEZ

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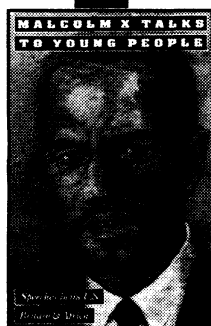
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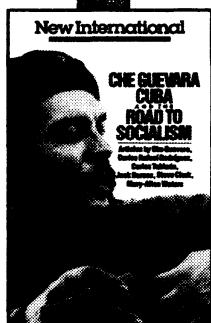
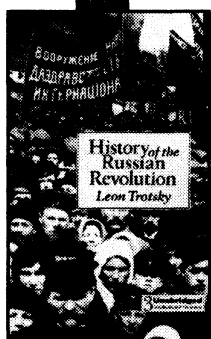
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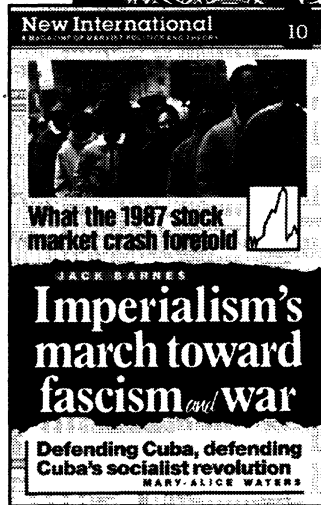
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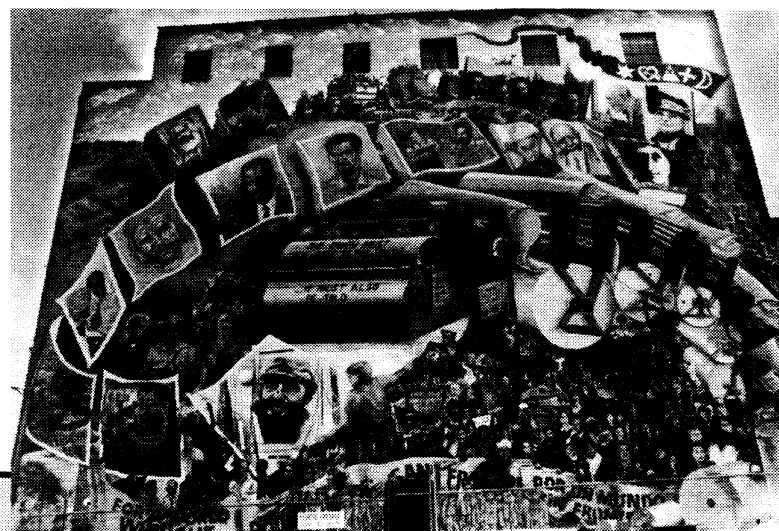
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Democrats, Republicans target Social Security

Continued from front page

ing sponsored by the Senate Finance Committee, chaired by Republican Roth. Moynihan is the ranking Democrat on the committee.

Moynihan explains coming assault

A few days earlier, Moynihan explained what was coming and offered his public endorsement for a version of the Boskin proposals.

The Democratic Senator appeared on the December 1 NBC television show "Meet the Press," along with Senate Republican whip Donald Nickles.

"The first decision we're going to make is not about Medicare or any other thing," Moynihan said. "It's about revenue. On this Wednesday, a bipartisan commission appointed by the Finance Committee two years ago is going to come... forward with a proposal on changing our cost-of-living calculations."

Moynihan pointed to a Bureau of Labor Statistics pamphlet he said explains that the CPI is mistakenly called a cost-of-living index.

"A true cost-of-living index, which we [use to] measure so many government programs, would give us savings [in] outlays and revenues of about \$1 trillion in 10 years," Moynihan stated. "We need to have some maintenance work on a government statistic that we have known for 30 years isn't getting things right.... This began as an index for wages in shipyards in World War I. It doesn't work today."

The program host pointed out that the alleged \$1 trillion in savings would come from "smaller cost-of-living increases to Social Security recipients... and higher taxes."

Moynihan responded, "It permeates our finances right now. If you correct [the CPI], if you just get it right — you're not trying to take anything away from people, just get the right number — the results would be immense."

"But, Senator, you say it doesn't hurt anybody," David Broder of the *Washington Post*, who joined in the questioning, chimed in. "That trillion dollars comes from people getting lower benefits and other people paying higher taxes."

Moynihan didn't miss a beat. "From the people getting the correct increase in their benefits," he asserted, drawing compliments from Senator Nickles. "I think that's a very small price to pay for a secure Social Security system into the next century and beyond," the Democratic senator declared.

Declining pensions

The Consumer Price Index is compiled by the Labor Department Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). It measures inflation by tracking the prices of a "market basket" of products reflecting typical purchases.

Cost-of-living adjustments on Social Security, veterans' benefits, and pensions for federal employees are pegged to the CPI. Social Security payments for next year, for example, are calculated on the basis of a 2.9 percent increase in the cost of living. If the government lowers this adjustment by 1.1 percent, workers would lose about \$8 from the average monthly Social Security payment, now at \$724. According to the *New York Times*, if the decrease was retroactive those who retired at the start of 1985 would now be receiving nearly \$89 less per month.

Such a change in the price index would also adversely effect the pay of workers under union contracts that have wage increases directly tied to the CPI, although there are fewer of those than in the past. Many companies have eliminated cost-of-

living adjustments from contracts as part of the bosses' offensive against labor over the last two decades.

According to an article in the November 25 *Washington Post*, less than 40 percent of the 33 million U.S. citizens age 65 and over collect a pension other than Social Security. The average recipient gets less than \$10,000 per year. And on any given day today, only half of all workers are in jobs in which they earn credits toward pension plans. In most of the new jobs created, pension coverage is sparse. And many companies are increasingly hiring contract workers or temporary employees without health insurance or pension benefits.

A potential social explosion

The last time Washington attempted to touch Social Security benefits was in 1983, under a similar scare that the Social Security trust fund was about to plunge in the red. A bipartisan congressional panel headed by now Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan recommended introducing taxes on Social Security payments and raising Social Security deductions from workers' paychecks. A Democratic-majority Congress approved the Greenspan proposals and Republican president Ronald Reagan later signed them into law. Moynihan was at the center of reaching the bipartisan deal back then as well.

Top administration officials and other politicians admit that the proposed reduction in the CPI could be a potentially explosive step. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin

told the *Washington Post* that administration officials would have to study the Boskin commission report and "see how people react to it."

"If you perceive Medicare as red-hot, this issue is white-hot" politically, said Richard May, staff director for the House budget committee. To consummate a bipartisan deal that includes the CPI change, he said, "Both sides would have to sign in blood that they wouldn't demagogue the issue." May said that Republicans were earlier pummeled by Democrats during the election campaign for proposing drastic cuts in Medicare, though Clinton himself had argued for cutting \$124 billion.

"I'd like for the President to lead" on this one, Senate majority leader Trent Lott said December 3.

The U.S. rulers' inability to reverse declining profit rates through "downsizing" and the cutbacks in social programs enacted so far, such as welfare, is fueling a broad ideological campaign for a more frontal assault on labor, despite the potential uproar the Boskin proposals may generate.

The *Wall Street Journal* editors gloated that the proposed "correction" of the CPI not only makes the closing of the budget deficit possible by cutting Social Security, but also proves that figures showing declining real wages for two decades are false!

"The Boskin data don't show a worker dramatically losing ground," asserted the December 4 *Journal* editorial. "They conclude that the same worker has actually realized a 13 percent improvement in his lot,

as measured by hourly earnings, since the early 1970s."

The Boskin justifications for rigging the CPI are now widely repeated in the editorial space of the capitalist press. The BLS "calculation takes inadequate account of the fact that consumers offset some of the impact of higher prices by switching to lower-priced goods," said an editorial in the December 5 *New York Times*.

On top of that, when the quality of a commodity rises no one can speak of a real price increase, claim the editors of the liberal daily. "A computer that does twice the work for twice the price does not truly add to the cost of living."

Other spokespeople for big business are explaining how some of the schemes to cut Social Security by revising the CPI could divide employed workers from those who are retired. The December 2 *Christian Science Monitor*, for example, interviewed David Wyss, an economist with DRI/McGraw-Hill in Lexington, Massachusetts. Wyss said one of the Boskin commission proposals is to establish a "cost-of-living index," in addition to the CPI.

"This would 'not mess up' private contracts," the article said. "Union workers, for example, would still get raises outlined in their contracts according to the CPI." At the same time the government would use the new index to lower cost-of-living adjustments for social entitlements.

The December 3 *Wall Street Journal* explained that many major corporations are

Continued on Page 10

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Sexual Abuse in the Armed Forces — The Root Causes. Speakers: Jean Morrison, coordinator San Fernando Valley National Organization for Women; Pat Nixon, Socialist Workers Party, member of Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Local 1-675. Fri., Dec. 13, 7:30 p.m. 2546 W. Pico Blvd. (1 1/2 blocks west of Vermont.) Donation: \$4. Tel: (213) 380-9460.

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston

Sexual Harassment: Where Does It Come From and How to Combat It. Panel discussion. Fri., Dec. 13, 8 p.m. 780 Tremont St. (corner of Massachusetts Av.) Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 247-6772.

MICHIGAN

Detroit

Rape, Sexual Harassment, and the U.S. Military: Behind the Recent Scandals. Speaker: Carol James, Gulf War Army vet, Socialist Workers Party, and member of International Association of Machinists. Fri., Dec. 13, 7 p.m. 7414 Woodward Av. Donation: \$4. Tel: (313) 875-0100.

MINNESOTA

St. Paul

Mass Protests in Yugoslavia Provoke Crisis for Belgrade. Speaker: Javier Aravena, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Dec. 13, 7:30 p.m. 2490 University Av. Donation: \$4. Tel: (612) 644-6325.

AUSTRALIA

Sydney

Imperialism and the Philippines: Eyewitness Report from Manila. Speaker: Ron Poulsen, Communist League. Fri., Dec. 13, 7 p.m. 66 Albion St. Surry Hills. Donation: \$4. Tel: (02) 9281 3297.

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland

Tonga and the Struggle for Democracy. Speaker: Kalafi Moala, editor of *Taimi 'o Tonga*, recently jailed for publishing an impeachment notice against a government minister. Moala will discuss the pro-democracy movement in Tonga. Fri., Dec. 13, 7 p.m. La Gonda Arcade, 203 Karangahape Rd. Donation: \$3. Tel: (9) 379-3075.

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CORRECTIONS

The article "A great moment in Cuban literature" on the Chicago tour of Cuban writer Norberto Codina, which appeared in the December 9 *Militant*, incorrectly stated that prior to the 1959 revolution only 22 percent of Cubans could read or write. The adult illiteracy rate in Cuba was about 25 percent at the time of the revolution; a mass literacy campaign reduced this figure to 3 percent by the end of 1961.

A calendar listing in the previous issue, dated December 2, wrongly listed a November 30 Socialist Education Day as taking place in Sydney, Australia. This event occurred in Auckland, New Zealand.

A fighting program — The British Labour Party is urging a national debate on what time children should be made to go to bed in or-



Harry Ring

der to keep them off the street at night. The *Times* of London reports, "The party has said that the roots of criminal behavior are planted in childhood by lax parenting."

Oops — In Vancouver, Canada, a

man facing trial realized he was being billed for a police tap on his phone. The phone company had inadvertently billed him for an incoming-call display it provided the cops. His lawyer thought it "a little cheeky to expect the person being tapped to pay for it." The cops conceded the disclosure could hurt their case.

A woman's place — An Italian court ruled that blasphemy against the Virgin Mary is not a criminal offense. According to the cops, a man who had his car confiscated had let out "a torrent of curses against God, the Madonna and all the saints." His lawyer pointed to an obscure point in the law distinguishing between blasphemy against "the Divinity" and abuse of "venerated persons,"

such as Mary.

Now here's a stumper — "African Americans die younger and have poorer health than others in this country. Researchers are struggling to figure out why," reports the *Bulletin* of the American Ass'n of Retired People. But one expert is not clueless. He suggests "the most likely answer" may be poverty and discrimination.

Yep, for some the times are a-changin' — A Bank of Montreal commercial uses a feel-good version of Bob Dylan's 1960s protest song, "The Times, They Are A-Changin'." The bank declined to say what it paid Dylan for use of the song. Dylan's PR person said the

composer-singer never considered it a big protest anthem. "For Bob," he said, "it was just a song he wrote."

Role models? — Steelcase, an office furniture company, has a lobby display of a colony of ants at work. A manager explains it's intended as a metaphor on how people live and work. His philosophical point is a bit murky, but it seems to be that you work, then you die.

If you work across the river — Check out the Hammacher Schlemmer catalog for the 12-foot "bionic" submarine. A one-seater, it will skim the water at 85 mph and, at a depth of 150 feet, cruise at 35 mph. \$139,000.

They got it half right — *Worth*, a magazine for moneybags, surveyed a group of billionaires and says it found that a number of them give "generously" to charities. Observed *Worth*: "America is at once the most acquisitive and the most philanthropic of cultures."

'Brighten the Corner' — We hope the folks in Sheffield, England, got through November OK. At the Sheffield Cathedral, churchgoers were urged to fill out "designing my funeral" forms indicated preferred prayers, music, etc. A church newsletter said that November — when "the darkness grows" and "dead leaves rattle and sigh" — is a time to "ready ourselves for death."

Lenin: 'Workers must respond to all tyranny'

In the opening years of this century, communists within the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party debated how to build the kind of proletarian party needed to lead the working class to take power. This struggle led to a split in 1903 in the party between the Bolsheviks (from the Russian word for majority) and reformist Mensheviks, or minority. V.I. Lenin's pamphlet, *What is to be Done?*, was published in 1902 as part of the polemics between these wings of the party.

The different political views within the R.S.D.L.P. were reflected in various publications, some of which Lenin refers to in the excerpt below. The paper *Iskra* (The Spark), was the first all-Russian illegal

BOOK OF THE WEEK

Marxist newspaper founded by Lenin in 1900. It played a decisive part in the establishment of the revolutionary Marxist party of the working class.

Rabochaya Mysl (Workers Thought) was the newspaper of the Economists, a Russian variant of syndicalism and an opportunist trend in Russian Social-Democracy at the turn of the century. The Economists limited the tasks of the working-class movement to the economic struggle for bettering the conditions and wages of the working class, maintaining that the political struggle should be left to the liberal bourgeoisie. The Economists opposed the concept of a centralized revolutionary party built around one program and with one leadership, favoring instead a loose-knit federation of local groups.



Everyone knows that the economic struggle of the Russian workers underwent widespread development and consolidation simultaneously with the production of "literature" exposing economic (factory and occupational) conditions. The "leaflets" were devoted mainly to the exposure of the factory system, and very soon a veritable passion for exposures was roused among the workers. As soon as the workers realized that the Social-Democratic study circles desired to, and could, supply them with a new kind of leaflet that told the whole truth about their miserable existence, about their unbearably hard toil, and their lack of rights, they began to send in, actually flood us with, corre-

spondence from the factories and work-shops....

The overwhelming majority of Russian Social-Democrats have of late been almost entirely absorbed by this work of organising the exposure of factory conditions. Suffice it to recall *Rabochaya Mysl* to see the extent to which they have been absorbed by it — so much so, indeed, that they have lost sight of the fact that this, *taken by itself*, is in essence still not Social-Democratic work, but merely trade-union work.

As a matter of fact, the exposures merely dealt with the relations between the workers in a given trade and their employers, and all they achieved was that the sellers of labour-power learned to sell their "commodity" on better terms and to fight the purchasers over a purely commercial deal.

These exposures could have served (if properly utilised by an organisation of revolutionaries) as a beginning and a component part of Social-Democratic activity; but they could also have led (and, given a worshipful attitude towards spontaneity, were bound to lead) to a "purely trade-union" struggle and to a non-Social-Democratic working-class movement.

Social-Democracy leads the struggle of the working class, not only for better terms for the sale of labour-power, but for the abolition of the social system that compels the propertyless to sell themselves to the rich.

Social-Democracy represents the working class, not in its relation to a given group of employers alone, but in its relation to all classes of modern society and to the state as an organised political force.

Hence, it follows that not only must Social-Democrats not confine themselves exclusively to the economic struggle, but that they must not allow the organisation of economic exposures to become the predominant part of their activities. We must take up actively the political education of the working class and the development of its political consciousness....

Working-class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter *what class* is affected — unless they are trained, moreover, to respond from a Social-Democratic point of view and no other. The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class-consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe *every* other social class in *all* the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical, and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of all aspects of the life and activity of all classes, strata, and groups of the population.

Those who concentrate the attention, observation, and consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself alone are not Social-Democrats; for the self-knowledge of the working class is indissolubly bound up, not solely with a fully clear theoretical understanding or rather, not so much with the theoretical, as with the practical, understanding — of the relationships between all the various classes of modern society, acquired through the experience of political life.

For this reason the conception of the economic struggle as the most widely applicable means of drawing the masses into the political movement, which our Economists preach, is so extremely harmful and reactionary in its

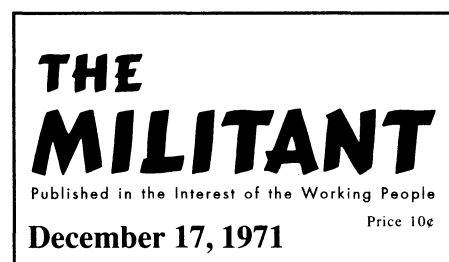


Workers demonstrate in the Russian industrial center of Petrograd in 1917. Lenin fought to build the type of party capable of leading the working class to take power.

practical significance.... But this "clear picture" cannot be obtained from any book. It can be obtained only from living examples and from exposures that follow close upon what is going on about us at a given moment; upon what is being discussed, in whispers perhaps, by each one in his own way; upon what finds expression in such and such events, in such and such statistics, in such and such court sentences, etc., etc. These comprehensive political exposures are an essential and *fundamental* condition for training the masses in revolutionary activity....

A word in passing about "calls to action."

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



As of November 30, the outcome of the November 28 elections in Uruguay was still in doubt. The Colorado party held the lead with 575,690 votes as against 565,556 for the National party (Blancos) and 252,534 for the Broad Front (Frente Amplio).

Although he quickly conceded defeat after seeing the early returns, General Liber Seregni Mosquera was perhaps the one most surprised by the defeat of the Broad Front. On November 26, the presidential candidate of the popular-front formation went on television and radio to give a victory speech, so certain was he that he would be swept into office.

The main architect of the Broad Front was the Communist Party. Its objective was to divert the current upsurge into safe electoral channels. As proof positive that it hoped to play the role of savior of the capitalist system rather than its destroyer, the Arismendi leadership of the CP made sure that the three leading candidates of the Broad Front would be acceptable to ruling circles in Uruguay. The ex-General Liber Seregni and Dr. Juan José Crottogini were nominated for the presidency and vice-

presidency, and Dr. Hugo Villar for mayor of Montevideo.



December 14, 1946

As fighting between the new Greek partisan movement and the government spread from northern to central and southern Greece last week, representatives of the reactionary Tsaldaris government tried before the UN Security Council to justify and even reinforce the presence of British imperialist troops in the country by charging Yugoslavia and Albania with provoking border disputes.

In recent weeks fighting in the north has been intensified by the reinforcement on both sides of important forces in men and heavy weapons. Thanks to the support of the population and the mountainous nature of this area; the partisans have not only driven back the attacks of Tsaldaris' troops, which are motorized and supported by an air force, but have even extended their control on more than 100 villages of West Macedonia.

The new partisan movement was formed by elements who had belonged to the ELAS as well as other workers and farmers opposed to the monarchist regime of terror. The partisans have reestablished telegraphic and telephonic communications, opened the schools and formed popular courts.

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What Is to Be Done?

by V.I. Lenin

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Defend Social Security!

During Washington's carpet bombing of Vietnam in the 1960s and early 1970s, U.S. military officials would often argue, "We had to destroy the village to save it."

That's essentially the argument put forward today by Democrats and Republicans alike, as they try to convince working people to accept cuts in Social Security and Medicare. These are social gains won for the entire working class as a by-product of mass political struggles that built the industrial unions in the 1930s, and brought down racist Jim Crow segregation in the late 1950s and 1960s. The two parties of big business do have tactical differences on how to reach the goal of cutting social entitlements, but they agree on the fundamental course and direction. Having exhausted other alternatives to reverse declining profit rates, the capitalist rulers are preparing a more direct assault on labor.

That's what the Boskin commission "finding" that the government exaggerates inflation is all about. It's a not-so-arcane way to push acceptance for cutting Social Security, and maybe do so without even having to pass a bill in Congress. Liberal Democrats have again taken the lead on this front, with Senator Daniel Moynihan popularizing many of the arguments of big business in the talk show circuit.

The argument that there isn't enough money for such "generous" Medicare and Social Security benefits — that the federal funds for these programs will go bankrupt if workers don't tighten their belts — is a fraud. Never in the history of humanity has there been more productive capacity in the world, more potential to provide every human being sufficient food, shelter, medical care, education, and other necessities. The crisis is not in the trust funds for entitlements but in the economic and social system, capitalism, which is run to maximize profits for an already wealthy minority and cannot turn those productive capacities to meeting the needs of the toiling majority.

In their drive to shore up profits, the employing class needs to cut workers' tiny share of what they produce — in other words reduce the value of their labor power. This is done both directly in the factories, through speed up and pay cuts, and also indirectly by attacking the social wage — what the working class has won as social entitlements that are not supposed to be reviewed under annual budgets.

The employers' war on labor is interlinked with the assault by the rulers on welfare and all sorts of public programs that provide income security for all.

As growing numbers of workers face fewer and fewer possibilities of getting jobs, even during economic upturns, the capitalists' attacks on social programs take a bigger toll. If workers' have bigger unemployment benefits and workers' compensation, when they get laid off they don't go out to look for any job the next morning. But the more these gains are eroded, the less confident working people become. It is much more likely they will rush out the door and take a job with significantly less pay. The capitalists succeed in lowering the value of workers' labor power as divisions and polarization within the working class increases.

The aim of the capitalists is to go after the solidarity of the working class; to make it appear that the conditions faced by the elderly, for example, are not the problem of the middle-aged or youth.

The most revealing explanations of what the bipartisan assault on Social Security is about are those made by some of the more forthright statisticians and economists. They say: when we passed Social Security we never expected to have to pay out most of it, because average life expectancy was lower than the retirement age. But now workers live 10 years longer than retirement age on average, and their ranks have multiplied. Won't you people face it that you don't deserve this generosity?

The capitalists would just as soon workers didn't exist before 13 years of age, and then die fast after retirement. The employers' class tries to pass off all responsibilities for caring for the young and the elderly to individual families.

Workers had and have a different view. For those on the assembly lines or the mine pits, Social Security was the beginning of the effort to moderate the divisions, the cutthroat competition, imposed on the working class — those who produce all the wealth — under capitalism. It was part of labor's struggle to gain and defend the right to live their entire life with some form of social and economic security, to begin looking at education, health care, and pensions as social rights for all.

From their class point of view, the owners of capital do face a genuine problem with the federal budget deficit and the growing national debt. But what's of interest to workers is how they try to solve it. One of the biggest causes of the growing deficit is interest payments to the holders of government bonds. The U.S. government bondholders are paid some \$200 billion each year, or 15 percent of the federal budget, more than all government spending on education, transportation, housing, and what used to be food stamps and Aid to Families with Dependent Children. But the payments to the wealthy bondholders are not being touched.

These are the billions of dollars capitalists already have that could be used not just to "save" Social Security but also raise the social wage and living standards of working people — the profits they squeeze from the fruits of our labor.

The "culture war" — including the scapegoating of immigrants and gays that accompanied the signing of the Welfare Reform Act and the Defense of Marriage Act this year — are at the heart of the assault on the social wage. The rulers' aim to find layers of the working class who suffer the most from these attacks and blame them for the social crisis of capitalism; point to them as an infection — as the Jews or foreigners were portrayed in the past. By blaming these workers, the bosses begin making conditions worse for all workers, as wages are driven down for the toilers as a whole.

Class-conscious workers have every interest in presenting the crisis unfolding in the world today not primarily as an economic and social matter but as the great political and moral crisis of our time. It's proof that only the working class has a chance to resolve this crisis and transform itself and society in the process in a truly human way. Only the working class has no interest in turning like dogs on the victims of a social system in terminal decline.

The only way to accomplish this once and for all is to overthrow the wages system and replace it with a socialist society. On this road, defending the gains registered in the Social Security Act and Medicare and Medicaid is an essential part of labor's battle.

Celebrate truckers' victory

Working people around the world should celebrate the victory won by truck drivers in France, who organized a 12-day strike paralyzing that country. The workers wrestled concessions from the bosses and government, winning some relief from the worsening hours, wages, and working conditions imposed on them over the last several years.

The victory of the strike and the sympathy it aroused among working people throughout France demonstrates the problems facing the rulers there and throughout Europe. The French capitalists are getting nervous about pushing through the austerity measures they need to bolster sagging profit rates and remain competitive with their imperialist rivals. Their ability to meet the conditions for entering the so-called European Monetary Union appear dimmer than ever. With unemployment at a record 12.6 percent, and persistent labor resistance to austerity, political tensions are pulling the government apart. The reaction from some bourgeois politicians, such as former president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, reveals how illusory the prospects are for creating a "united" Europe to counter the economic might of the U.S. ruling class. During the truckers strike Giscard called for a devaluation of the franc, to lessen the social tension over the austerity plan the Juppé government is trying to implement. For years Paris has kept interest rates up to maintain a strong French currency, pegged to the German mark. This policy puts a squeeze on anyone who works for a living or is looking for a job in France. But it has served the class interests of those who own and control wealth and all those who hold debt.

The proposed devaluation would torpedo any hopes of

a monetary union that would include Paris. French president Jacques Chirac quickly met with German chancellor Helmut Kohl to reassure him of Paris' commitment to maintain "stability between the franc and the mark."

The problem the rulers in Élysée Palace — as well as in Bonn, London, Rome, and other imperialist capitals — have yet to confront is that there is no way out for these bloodsuckers short of a frontal assault to defeat the working class and to smash workers' living standards and expectations. Each probe in this direction only deepens the crisis for the capitalists, as working-class resistance mounts. In the wake of the truckers' strike, a columnist in London's *Financial Times* scolded Paris for "an alarming failure of nerve on the part of the political authorities and an open invitation to other interest groups to try their luck by similar strong-arm methods." Their talk of "unity" aside, the borders are more important to the capitalist powers in Europe than ever. Borders are what defines the currency and military force of each nation state. So they will not give them up, despite their desire to establish a trade block against their rivals in Washington.

The working class has no interest in these national rivalries, which are used to pit toilers in one country against those in another. For working people, the only way to a genuinely united Europe is to get rid of capitalism and the dog-eat-dog competition it breeds. Supporting working-class struggles like the truck drivers' strike breaks down the divisions the bosses try to impose on us. The fight for jobs for all, as well to oppose any cutbacks on the social safety net, is also a key part of advancing the interests of the working class around the world.

Quebec labor

Continued from front page

dent strike that, over the course of several weeks in October and November, had included thousands of students at nearly 30 junior colleges across the province. They ended their strike after the government promised a freeze on tuition fees for students from the province during the current government's mandate. At the same time the government hiked tuition fees for out of province students.

On November 27, the six major unions representing the 400,000 public sector workers "declared war on Lucien Bouchard's government," as *La Presse* put it. The Quebec Teachers Federation (CEQ), Quebec Federation of Labor (FTQ), Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN), Quebec Nurses Federation (FIIQ), Quebec Government Employees Union (SPGQ), and Quebec Union of Public Employees (SFPQ) issued a common statement announcing that local meetings of their members would be held to discuss future united actions.

Lorraine Page, president of the CEQ and spokesperson for the unions, said, "We will not sit down with the government to discuss its proposal.... That proposal is dead."

The unions' response has been a major setback for the Bouchard government. In March, labor officials had been part of an economic summit along with the government and employers where they accepted a four-year objective of reducing the deficit to zero. Traditionally the labor movement in Quebec has supported the Parti Quebecois. PQ is a bourgeois nationalist party that is seen by many working people as a defender of the national rights of the Quebecois, an oppressed nationality in Canada. The PQ demands sovereignty for Quebec, which puts it in conflict with Canada's rulers. But as the Bouchard government presses its attacks, it strikes at the gains that Quebecois have fought for and won in their decades-long fight against national oppression.

Debates at the November 22-24 Parti Quebecois convention reflected the problems facing the governing party. Bouchard faced several challenges to his leadership. Only 76 percent of the delegates voted for a motion expressing their confidence in the leader. The vote had been expected to be much higher. Bouchard responded by leaving the convention. The next day the party fell in line behind its leader as he demanded that the party's rules be changed to give less power to the members.

About 30 nurses confronted Bouchard the day after the convention when he arrived at a Parti Quebecois meeting in one of the towns adjoining Montreal. *La Presse* titled the incident "Lucien Bouchard Noisily Scolded in Pointe-aux-Trembles." Bouchard continued his hard line when he addressed the meeting. "We haven't got a choice. We must rectify the situation. Quebec is the most indebted province in Canada, we must tackle the deficit." On November 28, 3,000 public workers demonstrated in St. Jean, near Montreal in front of a fund-raising event for a private school that Bouchard attended.

Workers in the public sector have been holding union meetings to decide on the next steps. André Doucet, a laboratory technician in one of Montreal's largest hospitals, reported that the 360 members of the CSN local at the hospital who attended their union meeting voted to be part of coordinated 24-hour strike actions, as well as participate in the December 7 demonstration in Quebec City. The CSN local organizes 1,700 workers, the majority at the hospital. Doucet's own smaller local also voted to participate in the actions. Doucet said that in the discussion at his union meeting he pointed out that the actions reflected workers' willingness to fight. He gave his view that when the leaders of his union propose measures like raising taxes, as they have, it only plays into the government's hands. "These are our rights we are fighting for," he said.

Patricia O'Beirne contributed to this article. She and Annette Kouri are members of the United Steelworkers of America in Montreal.

Social Security

Continued from Page 8

spending considerable sums on public forums and conferences to push the idea of privatizing Social Security and replacing it with millions of individual retirement accounts. Gradual steps toward wholesale privatization include proposals to convince workers to take part of their Social Security taxes and invest them in the stock market.

Attacks on Medicare and Medicaid, which provide health-care coverage for the elderly and disabled, and low income families, respectively, are being justified on the same grounds.

During the December 1 "Meet the Press" appearance, Moynihan said that the Medicare fund is not the only one in trouble. "The Medicaid fund is not going broke. It is broke. It has been in a negative cash flow for four years."

At the beginning of the TV program, Moynihan also dismissed the possibility that the Clinton administration and Congress may enact measures to roll back some of the cutbacks enacted with the Welfare Reform Act.

Last summer, the Democratic Senator was one of the handful to vote against that bill. He called it "the first step in dismantling the social contract that has been in place in the United States since at least the 1930s. Do not doubt that Social Security itself, which is to say insured retirement benefits, will be next. [The 1935 act pledged to] care for the elderly, the unemployed, the children. Drop the latter; watch the others fall."

Washington, D.C., mayor seeks cuts in city workers' pay and welfare benefits

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In an effort to meet the austerity demands of the Congress-appointed financial control board here, Mayor Marion Barry is seeking additional cuts in welfare benefits and city workers' pay.

The mayor has sent legislation to the city council, calling for a 5 percent reduction in the city's Aid to Families with Dependent Children program. This comes on top of the elimination of this program on a federal level in the so-called welfare reform bill recently signed into law by President William Clinton. Barry has also called for reducing the pay of unionized D.C. government workers by 6 percent.

Meanwhile the mayor insists on maintaining some \$1.6 million in the budget for salary raises and other perks for the D.C. government officials charged with implementing these cuts in social benefits and wages. Most of these administrators already make around \$90,000 a year.

Some city council members are calling instead for discharging more workers instead of cutting wages. Council member Jack Evans, a Democrat, defended Barry's decision to cut welfare benefits and raise administrators' pay, but disagreed on how to implement the plan. "Don't cut people's pay. Fire the people who you don't need."

Barry maintains that his approach of ordering pay cuts rather than firing workers is more "humane." Though he is also considering the option of eliminating hundreds of additional jobs by January.

Meanwhile the head of the D.C. financial control board, Andrew Brimmer, made clear December 1 that if the mayor doesn't promptly reduce spending on social services and benefits by \$85.4 million then he will decree legally binding orders for such cuts himself. Brimmer said he is considering cut-

ting about 1,000 D.C. government jobs in December. He also wants to speed up cuts in benefits for city employees. Earlier this fall, Barry ordered the elimination of dental and optical benefits for thousands of unionized city employees and placed restrictions on overtime and weekend pay. This move was subsequently overturned after the unions appealed to the city's Public Employee Relations Board.

The mayor and financial control board are considering additional cuts as well. These include: eliminating the city's "general public assistance" program, halting payment of health insurance premiums for people with AIDS, eliminating a local health care program for poor people who do not qualify for Medicaid, ending city aid for the elderly who cannot run errands on their own, and further reducing the hours that D.C. public libraries are open.

The latest round of attacks on working people occur just two weeks after the control board fired the school superintendent and stripped the elected school board of all powers, replacing it with appointed trustees. Charged with running the school system is retired Army general Julius Becton Jr.

The new school chief's first move was to announce that security is his top priority. He is reviewing a plan to send armed police officers into the schools, as well as to set up surveillance cameras and metal detectors in the hallways.

"These kids are not criminal, they are stu-

dents," stated a guidance counselor. "Would you want armed men in your child's school? What has it come to?"

Brian Williams is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 2609 in Sparrow Point, Maryland.



Protest against anti-affirmative action Proposition 209 in Northridge, California. Defending affirmative action was discussed at the Texas Chicano conference (see below).

Chicano youth discuss fights in Houston

BY ALEJANDRA RINCÓN AND CARLOS ALVARADO

HOUSTON — More than 300 high school and college students from Texas registered at the Tejana and Tejano Student Unity Weekend, held November 15-16 at the University of Houston. The conference was sponsored by La Raza Alianza, The Center for Mexican American Studies, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), Latina Coalition, Mexican American Student Organization, and the Hispanic Student Association.

The Washington, D.C., October 12 march in defense of immigrant workers and fighting attacks on affirmative action programs in colleges were widely discussed by this new generation of Chicano activists.

The opening session was welcomed by Tejana/Tejano Student Unity Weekend co-chairs, Rachel A. Gómez, Jennifer Flores, and Tatcho Mindiola, the director of the Center for Mexican American Studies at the University of Houston. The keynote address was given by Maria Jimenez, a long time activist in the Chicano movement and most recently a central figure in the October 12 march in Washington.

The Latina Coalition sponsored the workshop "The Feminist Perspective of the Chicano Movement: A Critique of Nationalism." It also conducted a Latina Caucus on "Sexism in the 90's." The issue of homosexuality was addressed at both the

roundtable discussion and the workshop.

The University of Texas (UT) at Austin MEChA chapter presented the workshop "Without Affirmative Action: The Hopwood Case." Bobby Garza explained the Hopwood case, which challenged affirmative action programs at UT. Garza reported that as a result of the case the UT administration eliminated or drastically cut graduate fellowship programs, scholarships, minority affairs offices, and the distribution of private scholarships for minorities through the campus. The administration also killed the Success Program, designed to help minority students make the transition to college easier.

Lisa Terry, one of the leaders of the UT Student Coalition in Defense of Affirmative Action, reported that activists organized rallies of up to 400, teach-ins, and a march of 200 to the state capitol during the spring. Terry noted that close to half of the protesters were Black and Chicano.

Olga Rodríguez, editor of *The Politics of Chicano Liberation* and recent Socialist Workers Party senatorial candidate in New Jersey, presented two workshops. Several of the participants had marched in Washington October 12.

Rodríguez said the Chicano movement gains strength when it fights the economic, political and social conditions that have determined its oppression in this country. Her view that capitalism is the root cause for the

attacks on immigrant workers and affirmative action stirred debate. Students like Valentin Reyes and Evelio Flores, from La Raza Alianza in Dallas, active in defense of immigrant rights said they agreed capitalism was the fundamental problem. Others disagreed and said they thought capitalism could be reformed.

Dagoberto Roríguez, first secretary of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C., also spoke at a workshop. La Raza Student Alliance, Latina Coalition, and MEChA at the University of Houston were prominent supporters of the Cuban diplomat's week-long speaking tour in Texas (see article on page 4).

The conference did not decide on any steps the Texas Chicano student organizations should take collectively in defense of immigrant rights or affirmative action. However, many of the local groups are involved in such activity. The MEChA chapter at Texas Lutheran University, in Seguin has been fighting cuts on affirmative action, like the Austin chapter. La Raza Alianza in Dallas has been active in organizing actions in defense of immigrant workers. MEChA in Houston has recently formed a committee to involve itself in defense of affirmative action.

Alejandra Rincón is a member of the Young Socialists and of MEChA. Carlos Alvarado is a rail worker in Houston.

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LETTERS

Poverty on rise in Canada

In the last week of November, the provincial government of Ontario boasted of the economy's recovery with the growth rising to 2.3 percent. The daily newspapers heralded the record-breaking increases on the Toronto Stock Exchange and reported that all the major Canadian banks had registered annual profits of over 1 billion dollars.

In the same week, statistics showing the dramatic rise in child poverty in Canada were reported in editorials in the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail*.

One in four children, about 1.3 million, live in families with income below the government established poverty line. The majority of poor children have both a mother and father at home. Nearly 60 percent of poor families had one parent work during the year, half of those at a full-time job. In metropolitan Toronto alone, children make up nearly half of food bank users. Each day in Toronto 13 families are evicted from their homes.

The simultaneous reporting of these developments underscore once again that we live in a society divided into classes, each with diametrically opposed interests, where the class of wealthy capitalists lives by the exploitation of the labor of the working class.

Al Cappe
Toronto, Ontario

Irish activist arrested

Roisin McAliskey, the 25-year-old daughter of Bernadette Devlin McAliskey was arrested last week and held in Casterleagh Interrogation center for seven days under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Roisin is now in London, where she was remanded in court for one week in Holloway prison because Germany has issued an extradition warrant for her. She is wanted in connection with the IRA attack last June in a British army base in Germany.

The evidence against Roisin is a photograph which a German doorman said "could" be a woman he

saw thought to be a member of the IRA active service unit which had carried out the attack and a piece of trash found in a hotel room which may have fingerprints on it.

Roisin is four and one-half months pregnant and her lawyer, Gareth Pierce, said October 26 that doctor's have ordered that Roisin must have obstetrics specialist facilities available at all times, which would not be available in prison. Another man, also a suspect in the IRA attack in Germany, was arrested in Dublin and an extradition warrant has also been issued for him.

Please call the German Consulates and ask that the German authorities drop the extradition request against Roisin McAliskey. Irish American Unity Conference Washington, D.C.

Consumer price index

Every union member, retired person or just plain worker should be aware of a nefarious plan in the

works to recalculate the consumer price index. A commission is about to recommend to Congress a new method of looking at price increases that would use the following logic.

For example, if the price of hardcover books rises too high, more people turn to paperbacks or use the library.

The (old) price index would register an increase in this case while a consumer, assuming roughly equal satisfaction, would have spent less. The new plan would register this situation not as a price increase, but perhaps even as a price decrease or no price increase at all.

After all, the consumer with a paperback is still reading, right? So if you can't afford steak any more and buy chicken, since you are getting "roughly equal satisfaction", no price increase is involved. If subsequently you can no longer afford chicken and turn to macaroni and cheese, again, since you have "roughly equal satisfaction" the CPI would not necessarily register an increase. So it would go, right down

to bread and water.

In a related article, the *New York Times* estimates that using this index, rather than real wages showing a ten percent loss in the last 20 years, a THIRTY-FIVE percent gain is registered. Geez, maybe we should give back some of those 2 percent wage increases we got recently!

This plan is headed for Congress with bi-partisan support. It is nothing less than a plot to pick the pocket of the entire working class. Labor and its allies better get moving on this one!

Jon Flanders
Albany, New York

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of general interest to our readers. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Truckers tie up France, win gains

BY NAT LONDON
AND CLAUDE BLETON

PARIS — As dawn rose November 29, the 12th day of a nation-wide action of truck drivers, 250 truck barricades were still holding firm throughout the country. By day's end, it became clear that a victory had been won and thousands of truckers started on the road home.

The drivers won retirement at age 55 instead of at 60 years and agreement from the government that their unpaid time loading, unloading, and waiting at the loading docks would be recognized as paid work time. The agreement also says the government will take measures to reduce the drivers' weekly work time, and cut from 10 to 5 the number of days before sick leave is fully paid.

Before the strike ended, some of the truck barriers set up on major highways had swollen to as many as 5,000 vehicles, including strikers, non-strikers, and truckers from other countries. Unlike previous truckers actions, this time the strikers were salaried drivers rather than independent owner-operators.

All 13 French oil refineries and half of the 400 gas storage depots were blocked by masses of semi-trailers, buses, and private cars, forcing the closure of half of France's 18,000 gas stations. Half of the country, including major cities such as Bordeaux and Marseille, was without gas.

Peugeot cut production at its auto assembly plants in Poissy and Sochaux. Renault's assembly plants in Meubeuge, Sandouville, and Douai shut down. The Douai plant's gates were barricaded by the truck drivers.

The effects of the strike, which started November 18, spread rapidly to other countries. All major border crossings from France to Belgium and Germany were blocked. The ports with ferry service to Britain were barricaded as well.

Truckers fight worsening conditions

Truck drivers in France have been protesting a steep decline in their wages and working conditions. Many drivers now work a 70-hour week for minimum wage, about \$1,000 a month. Much of their time — loading, unloading, and waiting for new shipments — has not been counted as work time.

A wave of support for the drivers' action swept the country. One poll showed 87 percent considered the drivers' demands justified, and 74 percent were personally in solidarity with the strike.

After six days, the government named a mediator to organize negotiations. With the truckers' action beginning to spread rapidly throughout the country, the bosses conceded one of the truckers' main demands — reducing the retirement age to 55 years after 25 years on the road. Previously, 40 years of work was necessary in order to retire at age 60.

The government will finance a large part of the cost and retired drivers will receive over 75 percent of their salary. According to the agreement, one young worker will be hired to replace each retiree.

In August 1993, the government raised the number of years of work necessary before retirement for workers in the private sector from 37.5 to 40. Retirement is at age 60 in the private sector.

Last year, Premier Alain Juppé tried to raise the retirement age for all public workers to 60 years after having worked for 40 years. This measure, touching 5.5 million workers, was pushed back by the November-December strike wave. As a result, railroad conductors and Paris bus drivers still retire at age 50 while many other public workers retire at 55. Other civil servants who retire at 60 years only need 37.5 years of work for full retirement benefits.

Discussions on the barricade

"I never really believed that this could happen," said Marc Guillot, a bus driver in the Paris suburb of Creteil, at a truck barricade November 27. "I'm a union member and I thought that if we don't act now no



Truckers blockade roadway circle near Caen in Normandy. The five day action halted deliveries to oil refineries and gas stations. Truckers say 50,000 vehicles participated.

one else will. So one day I drove my bus off its regular route and parked it here. Then I went looking for a telephone, called my union, Force Ouvrière, and said get some truckers here to help."

That was three days earlier, and Guillot's bus was still there, parked diagonally across the entrance ramp to Creteil's industrial zone. Twenty tractor trailers had joined him and were parked in a zig-zag pattern behind the bus. Inside the zone was the largest mail sorting center in France, now idle.

The truckers came from all over France. One was from Chambéry in the French Alps. They had built a fire and lean-to, but as night fell, we all went into the bus to warm up. Guillot's wife and four kids were living in the bus now and they prepared coffee for the cold and tired truckers. A couple of railroad workers were there, as well as a few workers from the nearby Renault plant. Later, a Paris bus driver came in to join the group.

The truckers in Guillot's bus said that they should continue the struggle in spite of the announcement earlier that day that they had won retirement at age 55. They insisted that all their time on the road, including loading and unloading, be counted as work time and paid accordingly. This was the only way they could get an actual reduction in their working hours as well as a pay raise.

A union representative came by to report that the number of truck barriers had risen from 210 to 250 during the course of the day, 1,800 gas stations were about to close, and truckers in Denmark were in the second day of a strike, blocking the border crossings into Germany. They had sent a solidarity message to the striking French drivers.

A few kilometers down the road, 100 drivers were huddled around an open fire, their rigs blocking the exit to the logistics platform of the Rungis wholesale commercial market. Almost all of Paris' food passes through the market, which is linked to the platform by a small bridge. The truckers allowed cars to go into the logistics platform where 1,500 people work. But no trucks were allowed in or out. The market itself was still functioning.

Some of the drivers were discussing their relations with drivers from other countries, thousands of whom were caught up in the truck barriers, often knowing little French and not understanding what the strike was about. In a few cases, violent incidents took place. One such incident in Alsace left a German driver in a coma.

The press tried to whip up sentiment against the strike by claiming that the "foreign truckers" were being held hostage by the strikers. Finally, some of the truck barricades had decided to let the drivers from other countries leave.

The barricade at Rungis was quite international. Among the hundred truckers around the fire were drivers from Portugal, Spain, Germany, Belgium and even Finland.

"The drivers from Britain left yesterday," the truckers told *Militant* reporters.

Unions are very weak among the 350,000 truck drivers. The largest union, the French Confederation of Democratic Labor (CFDT), only gets 18 percent of the vote in shop committee elections. Two other unions, the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) and Workers' Force (FO), receive 11.5 percent and 11 percent respectively. Almost half the truckers vote for non-union candidates.

At one point, Nicole Notat, the General Secretary of the CFDT, threatened to launch a "march on Paris," urging truckers to leave their barricades and blockade the French capital. This met with no success among the drivers, who preferred to reinforce the truck barriers. They instead decided to block the oil refineries and gas distribution centers, thus threatening to bring the entire French economy to a halt.

In 1992, the French government broke a truckers action that tried to blockade Paris. They used tanks and other military vehicles to tow away the offending tractor trailers.

The CGT called for a November 27 "National Day of Action" to support the truckers. Notat of the CFDT publicly criticized the action, saying that workers should avoid solidarity strikes.

Railroad workers at the Sotteville rail depot near Rouen, one of the strong points of last year's rail strike, tried to organize a solidarity strike for the National Day of Action. While their call was only followed by a minority of the rail workers, it disrupted rail service between Rouen, Le Havre and Paris. A rail and public transportation strike also took place at Nantes.

More typical of the CGT's "National Day of Action" was the rally of some 200 CGT shop stewards at the Rungis truckers barri-

cade.

At the nearby Renault auto plant at Choisy-le-roi, workers from the plant have been stopping off at the barricades on their own, bringing coffee and encouragement. Those who have been to the barricades are surrounded by fellow workers the next day and bombarded with questions about the progress of the struggle and the truckers continued determination. There was no meeting or even leaflets distributed at the plant about the CGT's Day of Action.

Once it became clear that the drivers would not end their strike even after having won retirement at age 55, the government was forced to announce that it would pass a decree within two weeks to recognize loading and unloading time as fully paid work time.

The last demand made by the truckers — a pay increase averaging 23 percent — has not been satisfied. The bosses have proposed 1 percent and a year-end bonus.

Although no one has yet seen the government's decree on work time, most drivers said that the strike had gone far enough that the decree would in fact satisfy this demand. And recognizing dock time as paid work time would mean a substantial raise for most drivers and facilitate efforts to limit the total amount of time worked in a week.

This victory is one of several won by workers in France since 1993. These fights against the employers and government austerity drive include the strike at Air France in 1993, the defeat of the government's sub-minimum youth wage in 1994, and the strike wave in 1995.

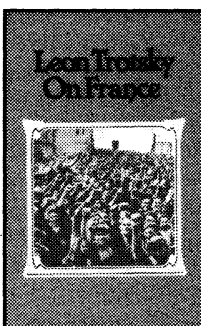
The bosses and the government are getting nervous about pushing through the austerity package they need to carry out. In the middle of the strike, former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing made an open call for a first-time devaluation of the franc in relation to the German mark and a devaluation of the future European currency in relation to the dollar. Paris has kept the franc high and attempted to make social cuts to lower the budget deficit in order to enter the European Monetary Union on par with Bonn.

Following Giscard's remarks, French president Jacques Chirac assured German chancellor Helmut Kohl of "the French position on the stability between the franc and the mark."

The strike has had a deep effect on workers as well. For 36 year old Jean-Claude Fernandez, with 15 years seniority at the GEC-Alsthom plant in the Paris suburb of St. Ouen, said "it's about time that the truckers acted. This is a struggle we can all use in the future."

As the truckers took down their barricades, France Info, the national news radio network, announced that bus drivers in Nice had just gone on strike to lower their retirement age to 55, "like the truckers."

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